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CONSULTANT'S STUDY

THE OPEN SPACES OF TORONTO: A CLASSIFICATION

FINAL REPORT

cityplan '91

City of Toronto
Planning & Development
Department

Robert E. Millward
Commissioner

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July 1991

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Prepared for the City of Toronto
Planning and Development Department
and the Department Parks and Recreation
by Brown and Storey Architects

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A Classification

Prepared for the City of Toronto
Department of Planning and Development

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Open Spaces of Toronto : A Classification

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Executive Summary

This study was initiated by the Joint Working Committee for Open Space formed by the City of Toronto Department of Planning and Development, and the Department of Parks and Recreation, in order to develop a classification of types of open space in the downtown core of Toronto. The ambition of this work has been to:

develop definitions and criteria for each type by examining examples of open spaces in Toronto's downtown core

compare those to international examples drawn from cities in the immediate Ontario locale, North America, and internationally

suggest principles for the planning and design of individual sites for public space

recognize networks and patterns of open spaces, and discover ways of strengthening the existing systems

This study proposes a way of classifying the open space of downtown Toronto into the following different "types":

Forecourt: an open space between the public sidewalk and the main entrance facade of a building

Landscape Setback: an open space between the public sidewalk and the secondary facade of a building

Lot Park: a small open space that occupies an area less than a city block and has the proportion of a normal rectangular building lot

Intersection Park: a small open space that is formed at an intersection of streets

Courtyard: an open space substantially enclosed on all sides by buildings

Square: a major open space that occupies a city block and is formed by streets on at least three of four sides

Plaza: an arrangement of open spaces formed both by at least one street face and a minimum of two buildings within a major portion of a city block.

Natural Linear Park: a continuous open space that moves independently of the city grid following a natural landform like a ravine or creek

Artificial Linear Park: a continuous man-made secondary system of movement that travels through the city grid, like bicycle and jogging routes, and special promenades and boulevards

Urban Park: a large public open space that occupies an area of at least one city block

Metropolitan Park: an open space of "grand dimensions", of an area equal to that of a major neighbourhood

Each of these kinds of open space has been examined and summarized under the following headings: definition, location, size, edge, landscape, use, weather response, system, and other. While each type has its own specific characteristics, some general principles applying to all open spaces can be found:

Site Specific Design

- Open spaces have to be consciously and individually designed, taking into consideration the characteristics of the type but also site specific conditions that make each open space unique.

- The governing principles suggested for each type do not require identical solutions but rather a variation of design responses to reflect the individual characteristics of each site.

Interpretation and Use

- Design of open space should not be solely based on rigidly defined prescriptive programmes that suggest "zoning" of activities, but rather should encourage overlaps of activities and individual interpretations by a wide range of users that are constantly changing.

The City in the Park, and the Park in the City

- The design of open space should promote an integration between the natural and the built, so that the enjoyment of public space takes on some of the urbanity of the city and the city in turn becomes punctuated and elaborated by references to larger open spaces.

A Considered Environment

- The design of a considered environment must be a given requirement that is integrated with the whole of the design.

- Public safety in open spaces must be central to the creation and idea of the design and not simply an additive or circumstantial adjustment. The design of safe open spaces are created by integrated solutions that consider clarity of movement, emergency supports like phones and supervision, lighting, overlook and bordering public uses in adjacent buildings, and a general promotion of public uses in the space.

- The comfort of the environment is equally important; the designer must consider sheltering structures, provisions of shade by built and landscape elements, and public support facilities of quality (washrooms, concessions, exhibitions, shelters, furniture, lighting, drinking fountains, and pools).

Natural Systems

- Many of the different types of existing open spaces in Toronto follow a natural course of a creek or ravine system. New open spaces can be created that can strengthen this pattern and make the natural system more comprehensible to the city residents.

Man-made Systems

- An open space system is not only a physically connected network of space, but can also be a pattern of repeating spaces set into the city structure that is reinforced by tradition, habit, and the interpretation of the city residents.

- Man-made systems can be consciously created within the street structure of the city grid, as in a repeating pattern of neighbourhood lot parks, or a pattern of intersection parks that mark a special area or route in the city.

- Smaller scale systems can be introduced into the city as incremental pieces to reinforce existing systems or to initiate new ones, as in linear parks (cycling and jogging routes), and forecourts.

Organization of the Study

The open space types are first summarized in the matrix that follows this introduction. These summaries are repeated at the beginning of each section describing the eight types. These sections are introduced by a city map that charts the Toronto examples in their larger context. Following the general discussion of the type, the Toronto examples are illustrated and described. A chart showing the Toronto open spaces next to a selection of international and North American counterparts introduces observations and comparisons made across the range of open spaces shown. Each section concludes with a set of more detailed propositions addressing the principles of each type.

Organization of Principles

For each open space type, principles are organized under the following general headings:

1. **Place Creation and Modification**

Two directions may be taken in the creation of new open spaces:

modification of an existing condition,
redevelopment of new city neighbourhoods in existing areas

The basic issues of size, orientation, and context are examined to suggest appropriate ways of locating and proposing limits for each open space type.

2. **Space Definition**

The second category examines the boundaries of the open space, how the space is defined at its edges, and how the edges in turn can establish links to other adjoining spaces and city infrastructure. The term "edge" refers to a zone rather than a boundary to suggest that open spaces can be designed to promote connections and exchange in order to establish an intelligible system of public space.

3. **Place of Possibilities: Space in relationship to objects, objects in relationship to other objects, and to a whole**

The third category recognizes the requirement for the design of open spaces to set up an autonomous internal structure. It looks at the way this can be accomplished through the placing of objects and the spaces between them. The selection of objects, their materiality, form, scale and spacings become the mechanicsms of expressing the physical nature of the open space.

	DESCRIPTION	FORECOURT	LANDSCAPED SETBACK
DEFINITION	The essential characteristics of the space	The open space between the public sidewalk and the main entrance of a building.	The open space between the public sidewalk and any secondary face of the building.
LOCATION	The built form or city context for the space	In front of residential, commercial, institutional, and public buildings.	In front of residential, commercial,
SIZE	Dimension or scale relative to buildings or the city fabric	As long as the building or property face. Depth varies.	As long as the building or property face. Depth varies.
EDGE	Definition of the space by streets, buildings, landscape elements, etc.	o faced on one side by building and on opposite face by public sidewalk. o the two sides may be limited by secondary streets or by buildings.	o faced on one side by secondary building facade and on opposite face by the public sidewalk; open at ends.
LANDSCAPE	Elements such as trees, planting, hard and soft surfaces,support facilities,gates and entries, etctheir location and design	To be specifically designed as either an extension of the building or as an extension of the public sidewalk. Sets up an entry sequence into the building and includes a balance of planting, pavement, and seating. Edges should be defined by small scale elements, either built or landscape.	o to be specifically designed as an extension ofthe public sidewalk. o can include paved and planted surfaces, lighting, seating as size permits.
USE	Kinds of suitable activities	Entrance to building, casual sitting, passing by	Casual public use, sitting, cafes, displays
WEATHER	Desirable responses to weather conditions such as sun, wind, rain	o canopy at entrance, or mediating sheltered space; i.e. canopy, arcade, etc. o orient space to provide maximum sun during periods of intensive use.	Provide shaded areas by means of tree planting or built canopies.
SYSTEM	Role of the space in a network of open spaces in the city	Can collectively form a continuous open space along the street face and form incremental links to larger open spaces.	Can collectively form a continuous open space along the street face and form incremental links to larger open spaces.
OTHER	Access, hours of use, safety and security considerations such as lighting, lock up etc...	Open access at all times.	o Open access at all times o Avoid heavy understorey planting.

	SQUARE	PLAZA	NATURAL SYSTEM LINEAR PARK
DEFINITION	A large public open space that occupies a large proportion of, or the entire area of a city block. Surrounded on at least 3 of its 4 sides by public streets.	A rectangular open space that occupies a large proportion of, or the entire area of a city block. At least two buildings are located within the limits of the site, creating a series of connected smaller open spaces.	A continuous open space that follows a natural landform, such as ravine, creek, water's edge, etc., somewhat independently of the city street system.
LOCATION	A focus for its surrounding district, beyond its immediate edges. May share its block with a major institutional building.	The plaza is located on city blocks within the commercial core, with a minimum of one edge facing a public street.	Natural landforms such as ravines, water's edge, creeks, etc.
SIZE	The size of the square depends on the size of the block it occupies: downtown squares may be larger than neighbourhood squares that occupy smaller local blocks.	A plaza is generally rectangular and occupies a major proportion of a large city block.	Varies, irregular width, extensive length.
EDGE	Edges to the street should be defined but allow free movement through. Buildings on the opposite sides of surrounding streets should present a consistent built edge that defines the square as an enclosed "outdoor room".	At least one edge is made by a public street; others are made by buildings. The street edges should be open, but defined by trees or changes in level or materials. Buildings should be located to maximize sun penetration, improve wind conditions, and animate the space with at-grade activities and facilities.	Two relatively parallel continuous edges travelling through a changing city context.
LANDSCAPE	Perimeter trees define the space of the square as seperate from the street. Hard surfaces, with complementary planting allow large gatherings; grassed areas and gardens may also be appropriate. Public facilities may include water elements, sculpture, washrooms, concessions, bandstands, etc.	Small scale elements should be used to create a human scale, and define smaller sub-areas within the plaza. Trees can aid in creating a suitable microclimate. Public facilities such as washrooms, concessions, pavilions, etc. should be provided as distinct structures or integrated within clearly accessible areas of adjacent buildings.	Natural landscapes should be preserved and enhanced. Provide clear access points and legible routes; avoid dead ends.
USE	Casual use, passing through, secondary pedestrian routes, eating lunch, entrances to public buildings, special uses like public demonstrations, celebrations, ceremonies, performances, exhibitions.	Casual use, passing through, secondary pedestrian routes, eating lunch, entrances to surrounding buildings, small performances and exhibits.	Walks, jogging, picnics.
WEATHER	The built edge should be controlled to ensure good sunlight from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, and to avoid heavy wind conditions.	Buildings should be sited to ensure good sunlight from midmorning to mid-afternoon, and to ameliorate unfavourable wind conditions.	Natural
SYSTEM	The square should be the centre of a network of open spaces. Connections should be made by the geometry of linking paths and through routes, and by smaller types of open spaces such as forecourts, passages, pocket parks, etc.	A plaza can connect into other secondary routes across city blocks, and work within a system of consistent setbacks.	The linear park can connect a series of urban parks along its length.
OTHER	Open day and night; provide high levels of lighting, at-grade uses that are active at night; keep edges open and accessible.	Open day and night; provide high levels of lighting, at-grade public uses which are active at night; keep edges open and accessible.	Provide a clear system of repeating ways out of the linear park with emergency phones and good lighting.

COURTYARD	LOT PARK	INTERSECTION PARK
An open space substantially enclosed on all of its four sides by built form.	An open space that occupies an area less than a city block, and whose proportions are comparable to a normal city building lot.	An open space that is formed by an elaboration of a street intersection.
Interiors of city blocks, with or without street frontage. It should always be well connected to public movement systems, avoiding dead ends and isolated locations.	Within a normal city block, with a minimum of one side open to a public street.	Intersections where the city grid has shifted; elaborations of intersections, and intersections between streets and railways, subways, and expressway ramps.
Size should be determined by the height of the surrounding buildings, to ensure that the space receives good sunlight.	Proportioned to a normal city lot; width to length ratio approximately 2:3	Irregularly shaped (elliptical, circular, triangular); area varies.
The quality of the courtyard will be determined by the design of its walls. The wall proportions should admit sunlight during high use times and provide overlook conditions.	At least one edge is open to a street and at least one edge is made by a building. The street edge should be defined by a balance of planted and built elements that maintains openness. Buildings at edges should overlook the space and support the use of the park.	Streets at all edges.
The organization of the courtyard should provide at least two clear public access points. The courtyard should be designed as an enclosed room with its own specific balance of paved and planted areas.	Each lot park should be site specific, resulting in a unique and imageable landscaped "room", using a balance of elements.	The design should have a focus (sculpture, fountain, garden) and separate structure. Sheltered spaces and a balance of paved and planted materials should create a centred space that provides visual and spatial relief from the congestion of the city.
Playgrounds, cafes, casual sitting.	Eating lunch, playgrounds, ceremonies, performances, exhibitions, casual use.	Casual use, sitting, bus stops, passing through.
The building edge should allow for adequate sunlight and mitigate prevailing winds.	Optimum orientation to receive sunlight at noon hour; provide shaded areas by canopies and planting.	Shelters for bus stops, shade from trees.
Courtyards can connect to public streets and form part of a continuous pedestrian system of movement; e.g. the University of Toronto downtown campus.	The small lot park can be a commecting link between larger urban park spaces, and can also form part of a secondary pedestrian movement system through the city.	Can form part of a system of intersection parks to mark a special street or area of the city; can act as a link to larger open spaces.
Avoid dead ends. Close courtyard after hours if it is not located on a regular public through route.	Open to the public during use hours. The design should not create dead end spaces or places to hide. Lighting, phone booths, access to public washrooms, and public activities at the ground floor of adjacent buildings will ensure overlook and "occupation" of the site.	Lighting required; no understorey at planted edges.

"CONSTRUCTED" LINEAR PARK	URBAN PARK	METROPOLITAN PARK
A man-made secondary system of movement that travels through and along the city street system.	A large public open space that occupies an area of at least one city block, usually several.	An open space of "grand dimensions" whose users come from both the city and its surrounding region.
Varies; can form connections between larger open spaces.	Developed around natural features; e.g. ravine, creeks, etc.; often forms a boundary to several distinct neighbourhoods.	Forms a limit to the downtown core; is often located at or around a major natural feature.
Narrow in width, unlimited in length.	The largest space in the downtown core or a neighbourhood; normally occupies an area equivalent to four city blocks.	The largest of the city's open spaces; comparable in size to a normal city neighbourhood.
Two parallel edges that move through many contexts. These edges can be marked by specific planting along their lengths.	Principal edges are made by streets, with some secondary edges facing buildings. Edges should be open and publicly accessible.	Edges are usually made by city streets and a natural boundary such as the waterfront or a major ravine/river system. City edges may be treated as an "intermediate " zone which extends public spaces of the city into the park's natural setting.
"Nodes", places with seating, water fountains, lighting, phone booths, etc., can be provided at significant locations along its length. The width of the linear park should be determined by the needs of the different types of movement; e.g. separate joggers from walkers, from cyclists, etc.	A balance between paved areas and natural settings to promote regular use. The natural setting and landforms should be enhanced, but not at the expense of creating unsafe, isolated areas.	Major public routes should pass through the park to promote constant use and "occupation". Park internal movement systems should clearly connect into these public routes. The scale of the park should encompass a full range of public activities.
Strolling, jogging, cycling.	Casual use, passing through, secondary pedestrian routes, recreational sports, community centres, festivals, play grounds, pools, etc.	Large scale activities such as exhibitions, amusements, sports fields mixed with individual recreation, and casual uses. Extensive and significant structures may be associated with such uses. Planning should allow the use of the park by users ranging from large formal gatherings to small groups, to individuals.
Provide shade with planted or built canopies, with sheltered zones at "nodes".	Areas of shelter and shade should be provided around activity zones.	Areas of shelter and shade should be provided at regular intervals throughout the park.
The linear park can link other larger open spaces throughout the city, and should begin and end at these spaces.	Urban parks can be linked together through creek and ravine systems by smaller components, e.g. linear parks, lot parks, etc.	The Metropolitan Park can be the origin or destination of an open space system established in the downtown core of the city.
Keep the route of the linear system within easy access from public streets, avoid isolated areas.	Safety: provide phone booths, legible access to public streets, high levels of lighting along pathways, avoid hidden, unsupervised areas, etc.	All routes should connect to major public streets that run through the Park. Built facilities should include phone booths, lighting, washrooms, emergency help stations.

An Introduction to Typology

The city is a place that is made and transformed by a process that involves political, economic and architectural considerations. It is ultimately a ground where ideas and thoughts are transformed into public places and structures of the city, or what is called **the urban public realm**: the street, the square, the park, the market, the arena. This common ground is the means by which cities are understood, through which the city communicates and establishes its nature and civilization.

These public works, of open spaces and built spaces, form the structure of the city. While functioning as distinct autonomous pieces, with their own internal orders and natures, they are also nonetheless read simultaneously as fragments of a larger totality. The character and identity of the city can be witnessed both through the autonomous natures of its fragments, and the dialogue that occurs through the relationship of the fragments to the whole. The city is made and confirmed by architectural and urbanistic practices that can be interpreted through the manner in which buildings, streets, and public spaces relate to one another in defining the public realm.

Both built form and open space are understood as a collection of **types**, a term that allows a categorization according to common shared characteristics. These general **types** are shared across many cities, though each city tends to have its own morphological and characteristic "rules" that temper the type to be somewhat particular to its origin.

For example, the typical semi-detached single family house of Toronto can be called a **type**:

> **[characteristics: side hall with single run stair, three rooms both ground and second floors, two rooms third floor, light front and back faces, displacement at middle room for light source]**

This type occurs across the city, across a span of one hundred years. It is the result of a lot structure that finds its origin in the very first act of the town of York survey, the economics of land development, and the derivation of the traditional English model that has been transported to Toronto and transformed to suit its new host.

By understanding the type, its characteristics, its origins and its economics, one can work with the type to develop distinct and enjoyable "examples", and to make changes to the type that reflect modern conditions and use/programming:

ie. the transformation of the single family to a triplex, from the triplex to commercial/offices, and even back to single family once again.

In a similar manner, a **typology for open spaces** in the city exists. However, this system of open space types has not been clearly defined or generally understood. The open spaces of the city was once a well understood framework, an accepted and agreed upon codification of types, and a mutually acceptable means of thinking about the form of the city, in additions and in enhancements. The late absence of the understanding of the roles and natures of the city's open space endangers the priceless commodity of the public space of the city through their loss of meaning and perceived value.

By classifying the different types of open spaces, and by identifying existing systems and potential new ones, this study proposes that the public open spaces of the city can be recognized and in some cases improved upon as important entities of the city's infrastructure and worthy of the best quality of design and development.

Mapping of Open Spaces

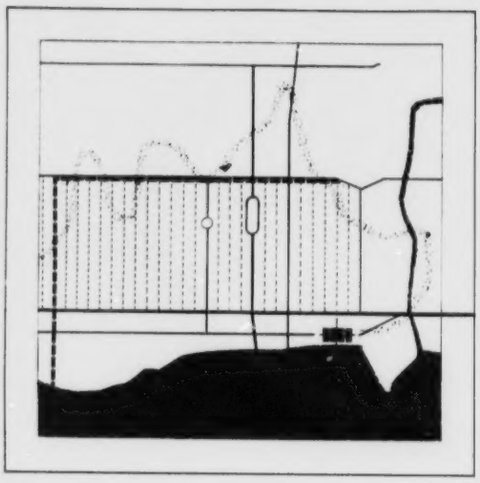
The mapping and locational system used in this study is based on a five square grid that has been placed over the centre of Toronto. This allows examples of open space to be seen within a clear retrieval system in its city-wide context, a more localized context, an immediate context and a detail plan level.

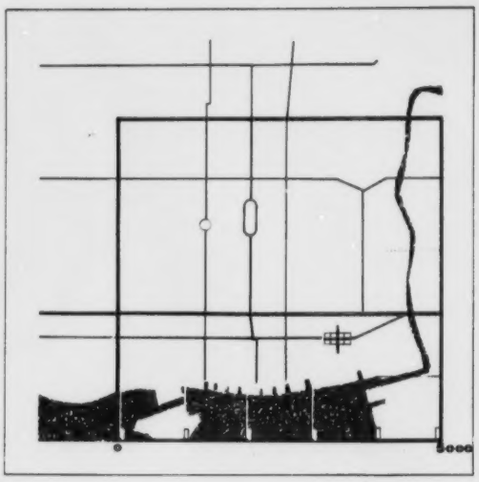
This grid is positioned so that it aligns closely with the original park lot divisions of Toronto that have given rise to the city's major north-south streets. The five square grid is also located to correspond in its divisions to the centre line of the eight original surveyed blocks that initiated the town of York.

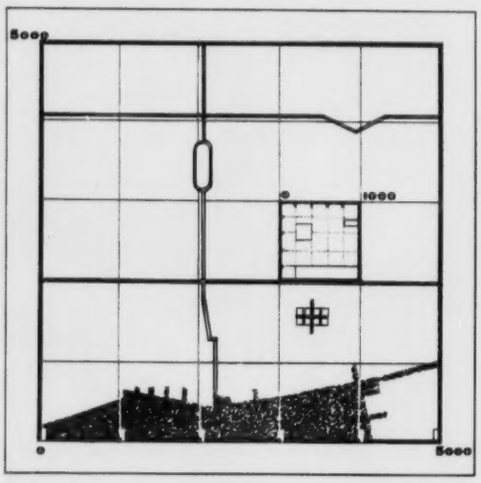
The overall size of the grid is 5000 meters x 5000 meters, divided into 1000 meter x 1000 meter sections. These smaller sections form the normal Context Plans shown throughout the study for each illustrated example.

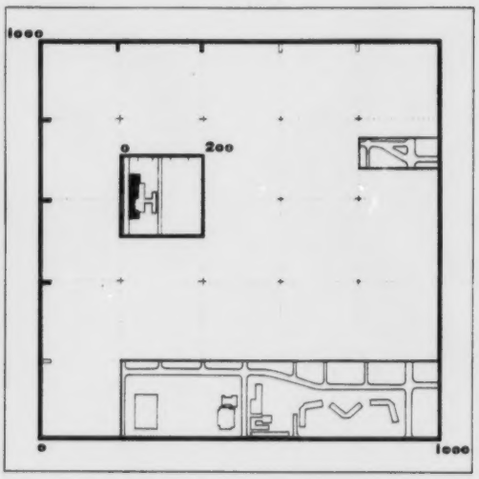
The Context Plan section is then divided into a further five square grid of 200 meters x 200 meters which gives a more localized site plan for each example. Detail plans of the open space examples are derived from a further division and enhancement of the 200 meter grid into 40 meter x 40 meter segments.

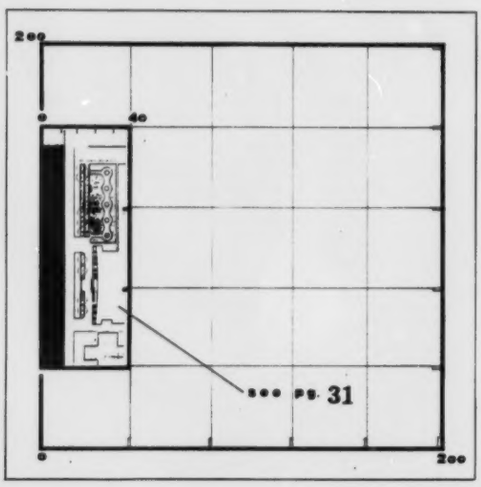
Where examples are taken from outside the basic 5000m x 5000m study area, the grid is able to shift over in equal divisions to pick up open spaces like High Park, Coronation Park and the Toronto Islands which then work within the same system of retrieval.

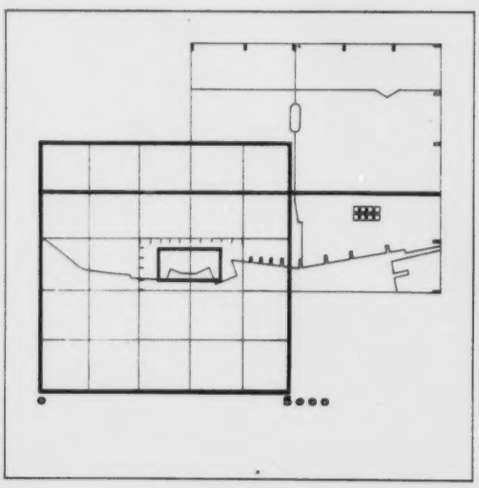












Mapping

Forecourt / Landscaped Setback

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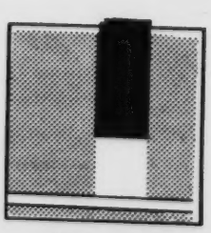
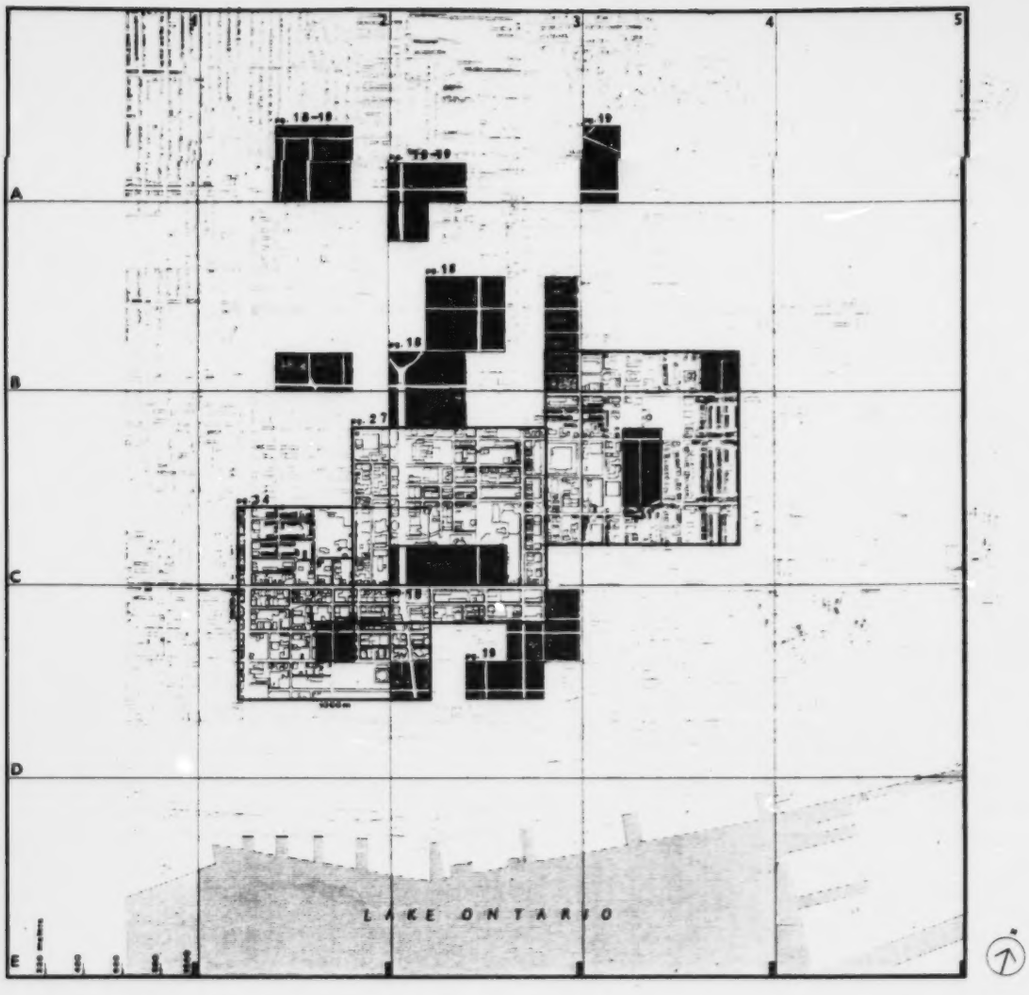


Forecourt



FORECOURTS **M A P P I N G**

Forecourts

Definition The open space between the public sidewalk and the main entrance of a building.

Location In front of residential, commercial, institutional and public buildings.

Size As long as the building or property face. Depth varies

Edge
- faced on one side by building and on opposite face by public sidewalk
- the two sides may be limited by secondary streets or by buildings

Landscape To be specifically designed as either an extension of the building or as an extension of the public sidewalk.

Sets up an entry sequence into the building and include a balance of planting, pavement and seating.

Edges should be defined by either built or landscape small scale elements.

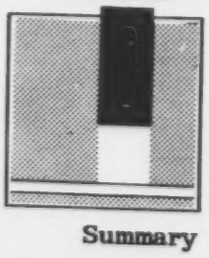
Use Entrance to building, casual sitting, passing by

Weather
- canopy at entrance or mediating sheltered space, ie canopy, arcade
- orient space to provide maximum sun during period of maximum use

System Can collectively form a continuous open space along the street face and form incremental links to larger open spaces.

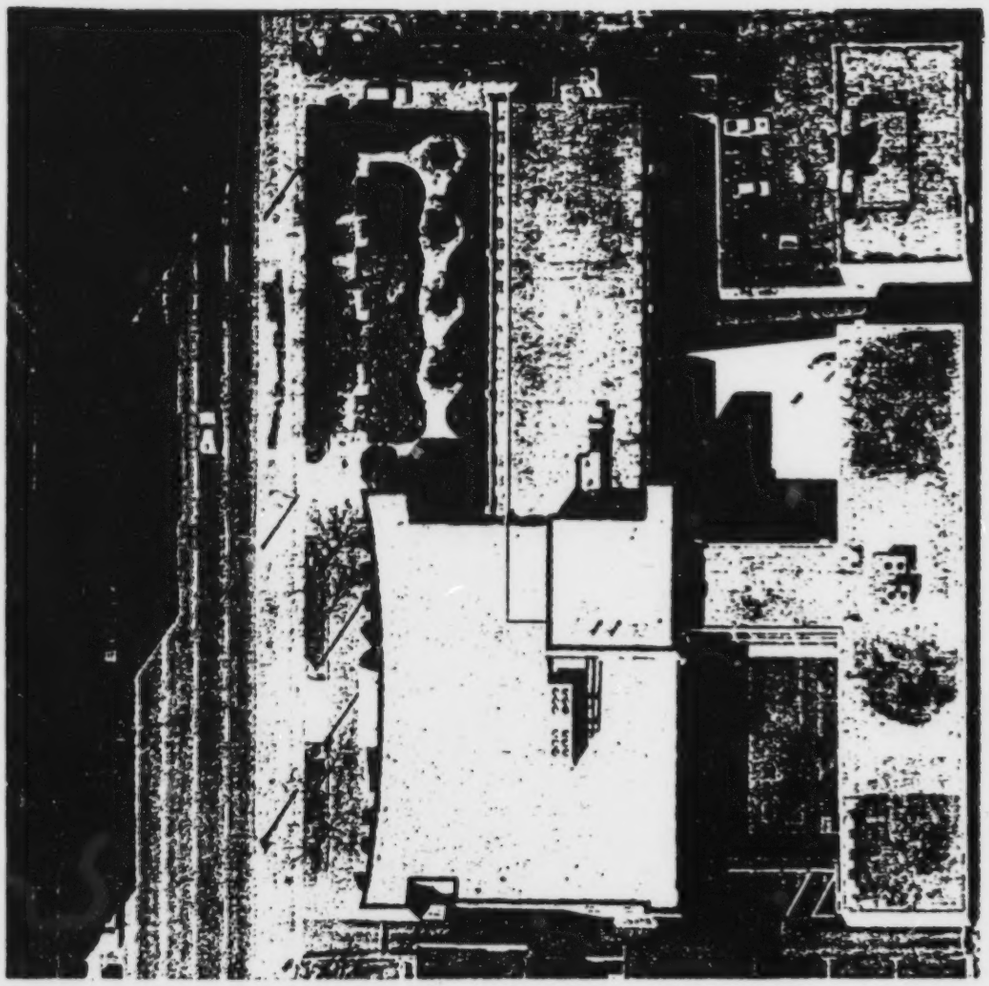
Other Open access at all times

Forecourt



Landscaped Setbacks

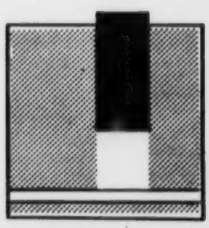
Definition	The open space between the public sidewalk and any secondary face of a building.
Location	In front of residential, commercial, institutional and public buildings.
Size	As long as the building or property face. Depth varies.
Edge	° faced on one side by secondary building facade and on opposite face by the public sidewalk; open at its ends.
Landscape	° to be specifically designed as an extension of the public sidewalk ° can include paved and planted surfaces, lighting, seating as size permits
Use	Casual public use, sitting, cafes, displays
Weather	Provide shaded areas by means of tree planting or built canopies
System	Can collectively form a continuous open space along the street face and form incremental links to larger open spaces.
Other	° Open access at all times ° avoid heavy understory planting



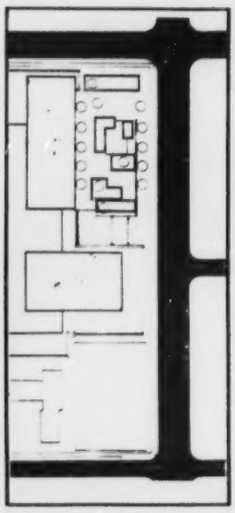
Definition

The forecourt is the open space set between the public sidewalk of a street and the entrance of front face of a building. One moves through a forecourt to enter its **sponsor building.** The term "sponsor building" is used to indicate the building that faces the forecourt. The forecourt provides the set for a sequence of steps between the public domain of the street and the private property of the building. The character and use of the forecourt is interdependent on the type and use of the building.

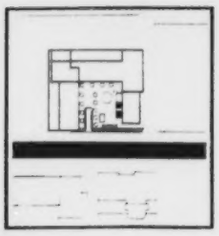
A variant of the forecourt space is the **landscaped setback.** While the term forecourt defines the space specifically between the front face of a building and the public sidewalk, the landscaped setback is a more general term which refers to land setbacks between the public sidewalk and any building face other than the main entrance facade. The landscaped setback is independent of the adjacent building face and can be designed to extend the space of the public sidewalk.

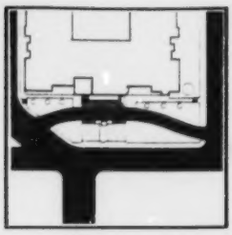


Forecourt

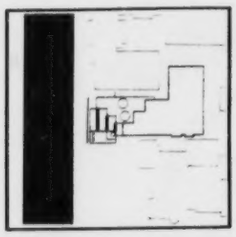


MacDonald Block

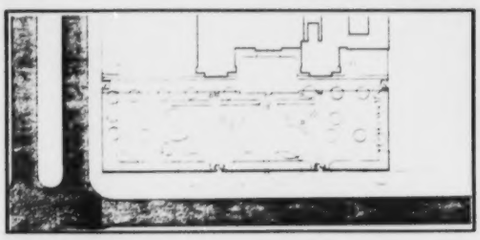




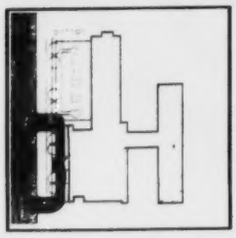
Old City Hall



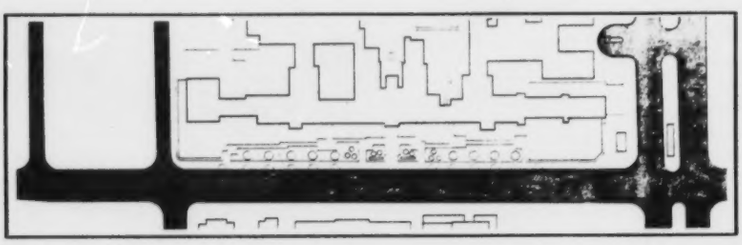
Gardiner Museum



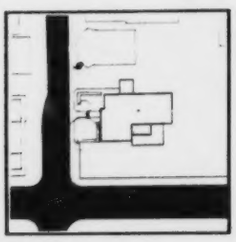
Osgoode Hall



311 Jarvis St.



Toronto General Hospital



York Club

Variants

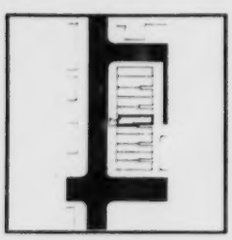
The forecourt can be subdivided into several categories determined by the use of the attached building:

Public Institutional Building and Forecourt

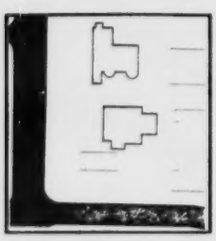
The forecourt space set in front of these types of buildings, for example the **Gardiner Museum, Old City Hall, and Royal Ontario Museum,** are completely public in use, access, and structure. The forecourt usually extends the material of the pavement and space of the public sidewalk, which effectively gives the open space to the public realm. Because of the highly public nature of the space, it becomes virtually independent of its sponsor building. The forecourt is used by the public in casual ways not necessarily related to the use of the building. For example the forecourt of Old City Hall is consistently used a place to eat lunch by people who are not there to enter the building. These forecourt spaces also fulfill ceremonial and political uses as in memorial services, demonstrations, speeches and public gatherings.

Private Institutional Building and Forecourt

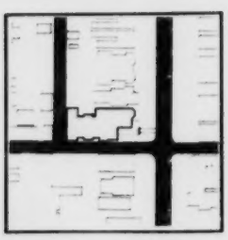
These types of forecourt spaces include those set in front of hospitals, and private clubs, where the institution may or may not be publicly funded but is intended for a specific or limited use. In these cases the character and use of the forecourt is dependent on that of its sponsor building. The use of the forecourt is limited and possibly restricted to those having specific business in the sponsor building. The nature of these spaces are representative of the image of the building. Surfaces tend to be lawns, and planting areas, with specific walks and limited seating areas. The edge to the sidewalk is quite distinctly made by curbs, walls, hedges, trees, or by simply the material change from the sidewalk paving to grass.



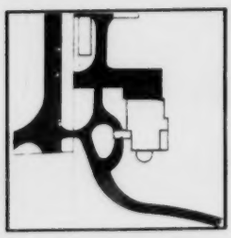
John St.



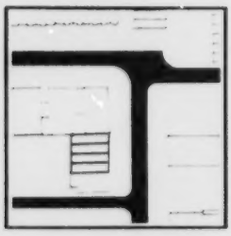
St. George St.

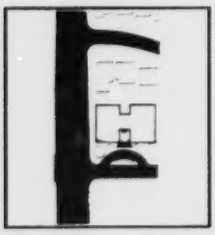


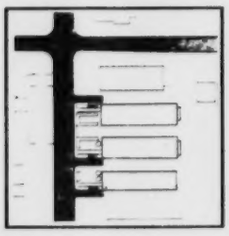
Pembroke St.

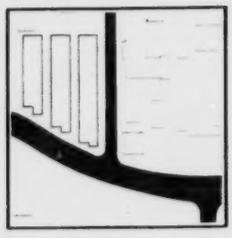


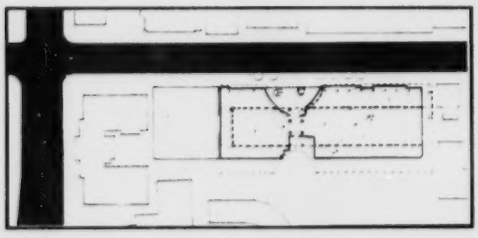
Residential Forecourts



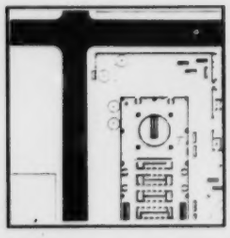




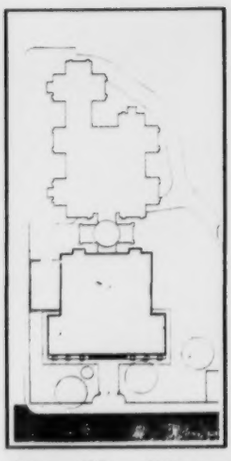




Colonnade, Bloor Street



Commerce Court



Manulife, Bloor St.

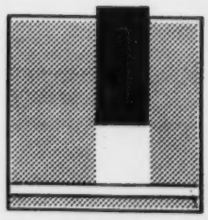
Commercial Forecourts

Commercial Building and Forecourt

The use of the forecourt set in front of banking, retail, and office towers are representative spaces of the image of the sponsor building. The space can be used as a means of display, or advertisement, or invitation to enter the building. In examples of corporate use, the forecourt is seen as symbolic and quasi-public. While the nature of these forecourts can appear to be completely public, the invisible line of ownership can appear when the public uses the space in ways inconsistent with the "image" the sponsor building wishes to project. The presence of the commercial building forecourt is desireable only when it is necessary to build into a previously existing system of forecourts along a public street.

Residential Building and Forecourt

At its smallest scale, the residential forecourt is the front yard of the single family house. The nature of the residential space is quite clear in its indication of its private use, intended for those who live there, or for those who are visiting. These spaces have restricted areas of paving for access and the majority of the surfaces are lawns and gardens. The sequence of steps from the public sidewalk to the entrance are subtle combinations of curbs, steps, low walls, elevational changes, and porches. The same sets of criterion can be applied equally to the single family house lot and the apartment building.



Forecourt

Adjacencies / Edges

Each edge condition of the forecourt is potentially different. The edge which most determines the nature and use of the forecourt is that at the public sidewalk. If this edge has open access along its face, the use of the forecourt is perceived to be for the general public use and can be actively occupied in a manner completely independent of the use of the building.

Where the use of the forecourt is meant mainly for those entering or using the sponsor building, there is a distinct edge made by trees, hedges, low walls, or railings that direct access to a specific entrance and through a prescribed order of steps into the building.

The edge of the forecourt to its building is quite often an integration of open space and built form. The open space of the forecourt and the building are often interconnected by means of building overhangs, loggias, porches, and steps.

The side edges of the forecourt frequently vary. In its most effective state, they border onto adjoining forecourt spaces or street corners in a system of continuous setbacks from the street. Alternately, in discontinuous states, and in its lower forms, the side edges may be formed by the party walls of adjoining buildings.

Form and Vegetation

When the forecourt is occupied by the general public independently of the use of the sponsor building, a majority of its surface is paved, with contained areas of planting, and is seen as an extension of the public realm of the sidewalk. Use of lawns and gardens as the major surface denotes a more ceremonious, and representative view of the forecourt, with restricted access shown through distinct movement paths.

Generally, a larger area of pavement denotes a more public, urbane extension of the public realm of the sidewalk. A greater amount of natural elements (lawns, planting, gardens) denotes a removal from the realm of the sidewalk. The open space becomes an extension of the less public realm of the building.

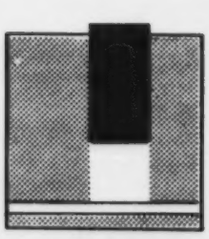
Scale

At its smallest scale, the forecourt appears as the residential front yard, where all of the conditions of the larger counterpart can be identified in compressed, compact layers. Where a front yard is mostly lawn with a distinct route to the front door (or porch), the space is seen as private domain. When a residential type changes to a commercial use, the front yard will often be the one element that changes to a paved surface, quickly identifying that building as other than residential.

At its other extreme of size, the forecourt in front of a large public building functions both as a setting for the buildings and as a public square or plaza. Where the open space in front of Old City Hall is clearly seen as forecourt, when that space is enlarged in the adjacent New City Hall, it then is seen as a square or plaza.This example demonstrates the change in perception of the open space when it ceases to be dependent upon its sponsor building. At a certain scale, the open space is perceived as being **"the space in front of the building"** where the space is seen as an ancillary component of the built form. When that open space is much larger, then it occupies a position equal to or more than equal to that of the building and becomes an autonomous space: ie. **"the building sits in the square"**.

If the space in front of the sponsor building is part of a larger street system of setbacks, it is considered a forecourt. If the space in front of the building is clearly defined at all edges by building faces either directly adjacent to the space, or across bordering streets, and the depth of the open space is greater than two times the height of the sponsor building, it should be considered to be a square.

Whereas the square is designed as a separate piece, a forecourt is designed principally as an extension of the public sidewalk or its sponsor building.



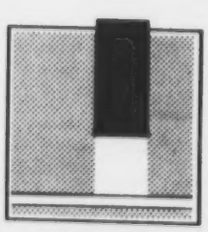
Forecourt

Facilities / Use

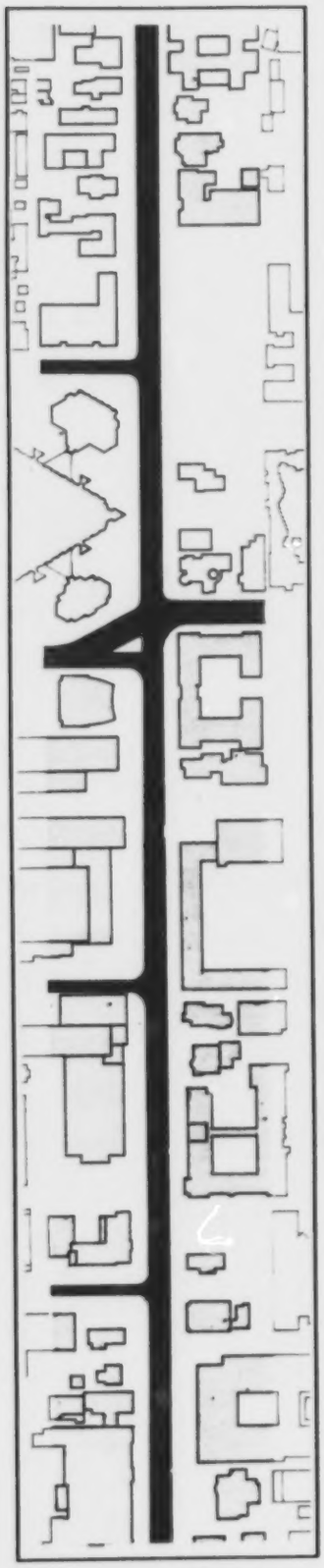
The forecourt space's primary function serves as a route from the public realm of the sidewalk to the private domain of the building. This route can be very direct in residential examples, although still potentially rich in sequence through the use of such devices as curbs, steps, hedges, and porches. Alternately the route can be very elaborate to accommodate ceremonial approaches and functions as demonstrated in the forecourt to the Ontario Parliament Buildings at Queen's Park.

The forecourt very often carries an important representative function, where the character or an image of the building and its use is demonstrated as the public first approaches the building. Thus forecourts very often will contain pieces of art or monuments, as in the cenotaph at Old City Hall, or in the corporate office buildings of the downtown core.

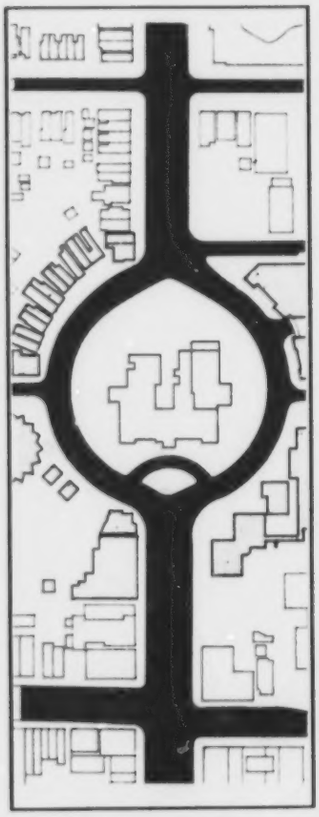
The forecourt also acts as a "waiting room" to a building as is portrayed in the Family Court Building at 311 Jarvis Street. In this case, more deliberate seating areas and ornamental gardens are made to create a "room" or separate space. The open space here plays an integrated role with the function of the sponsor building.



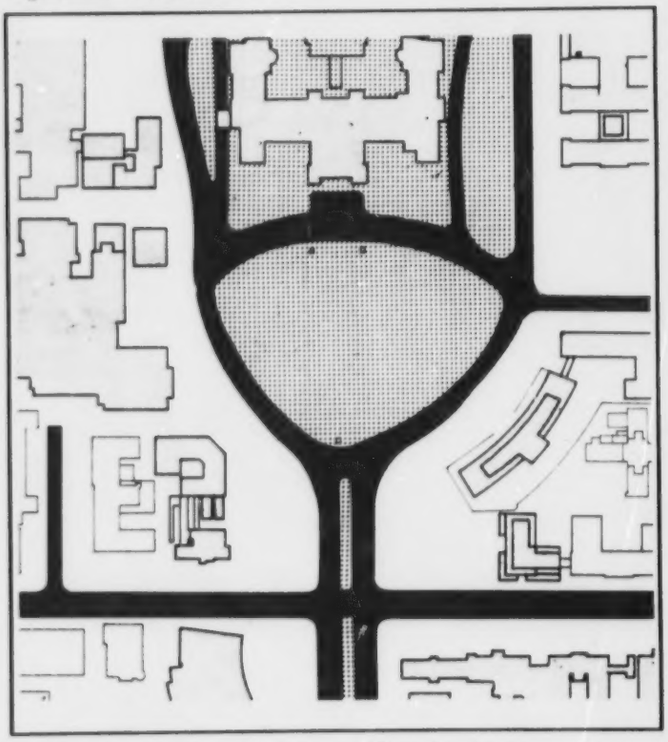
Forecourt



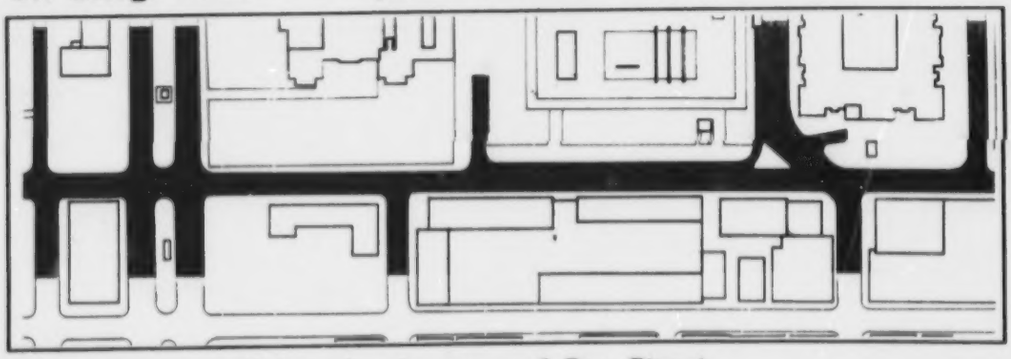
St. George Street



Spadina Crescent



Queen's Park and University Avenue



Queen Street at University Avenue and Bay Street

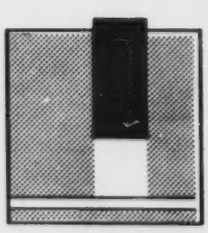
System

Forecourts and landscaped setbacks ultimately perform their most important use at the city scale where they are seen to form a cohesive strip of open space. These are effective at all scales of use.

The institutional sets of forecourts set up distinct zones within the city that are immediately identifiable as public lands and provide counterpoints to the relatively tight configuration of the core business districts of the city, as in the generous forecourt system on **College Street**. Similarly, the collective front yards of downtown residential street running as the cross grain between parallel main streets provide a relief of open space, by sight, by sound, and by quality and movement of air, as on **Alexandra, Monteith and Dundonald Streets running between Yonge and Church Streets.**

The conservation, renovation and maintenance of forecourt spaces ensures a continuity of the character and quality of the city street when new building types replace existing ones and are inserted into an existing strong urban fabric. **St. George Street above Bloor Street** retains its character of generous forecourts through a scattering of original mansions and the insertion of ten storey apartment buildings. The apartment buildings' adherence to the front yard setback from St. George Street, and their simulation of the same sequences of entry that exist for the mansions, has retained the open quality of the street. In this case the quality of St. George Street is conserved by virtue of the quality of the forecourt spaces.

The relatively small scale of the forecourt may be seen as having little individual impact upon the quality of the open spaces of the city. However, forecourts present a highly effective means of integrating more open space into the city's infrastructure of open and built form.

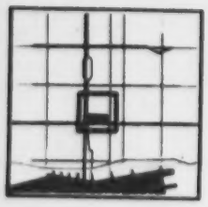


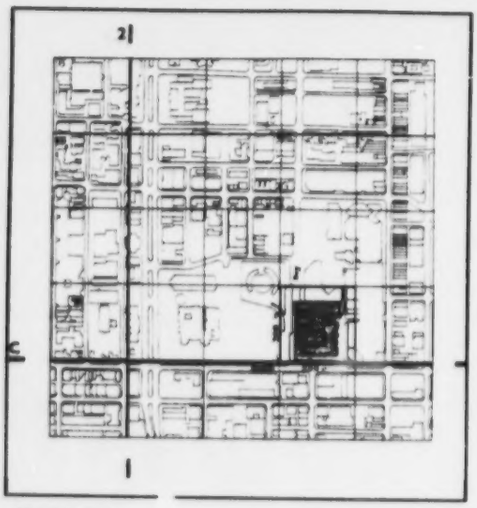
Forecourt

Ownership:	Public Institution
Building Use:	Courthouse
Frontage:	80m
Depth:	27m
Area:	1,809sm
Form:	45% Soft surface: lawn, flower beds 55% Hard surface: asphalt drive, concrete steps and pavement
Edges:	North: sponsor building (main facade) South: Queen Street East: James Street West: Bay Street
Use:	Ceremonial Entrance Casual (eating lunch, sitting)
System:	adjacent open spaces west to University Avenue (Nathan Philips Square, Osgoode Hall)

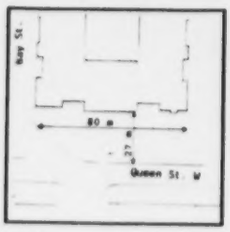
Old City Hall

Forecourt

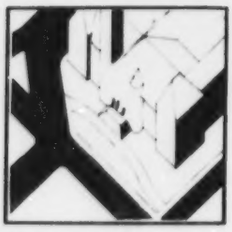




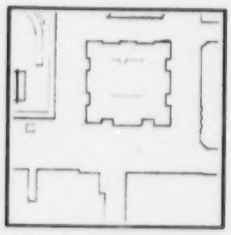
Context



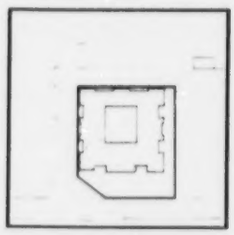
Site



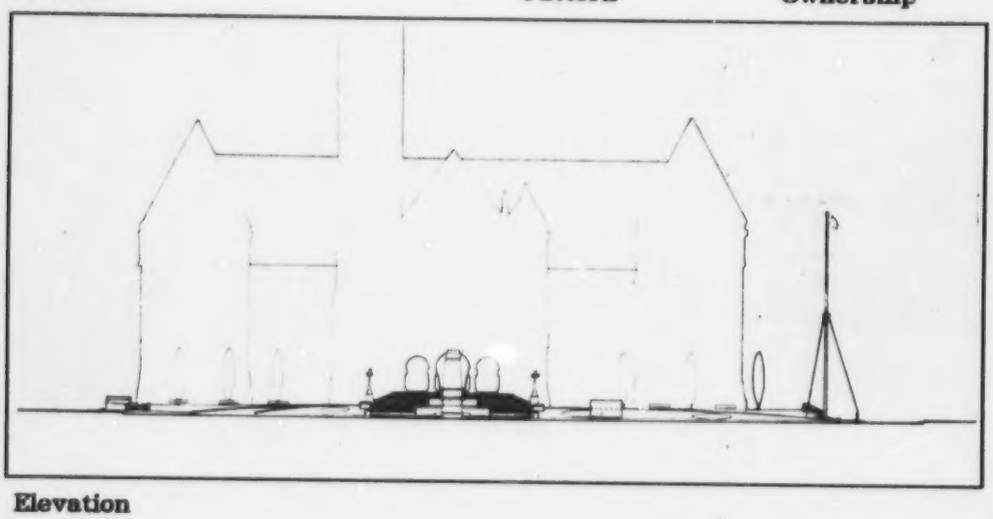
Volumetric



Pattern



Ownership



Elevation

The historical importance of Old City Hall on Queen Street, and its axial relationship to Bay Street, accord this building a stature of significance as an integral part of the city. The forecourt of Old City Hall is however somewhat shallow when considered against the building's mass, and the powerful Bay Street axis.

The forecourt is formed by the southern half of the city block which is totally occupied by Old City Hall. The western edge of the forecourt has been truncated by the realignment of the Bay Street deflection. The eastern edge faces James Street which functions as service access for the Eaton Centre. The south edge of the forecourt faces Queen Street and the Bay Street view, and the ornamental and complex facade of Old City Hall forms the northern edge.

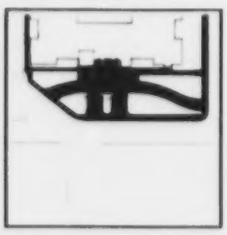
Although the courthouse function of Old City Hall results in a large amount of pedestrian traffic entering the building through the forecourt, this open space is used also as a public space independent of the building's use. It is extensively used in good weather as a place to eat lunch and meet friends. The forecourt also fulfills a ceremonial and symbolic role as the keeper of the war monument prominently placed in the centre of the space. Added to those active uses is the strictly formal role that this forecourt plays in its position at the head of Bay Street.

Use

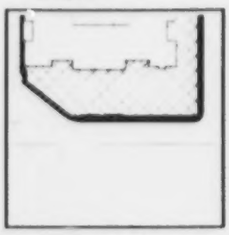
Movement

Edges

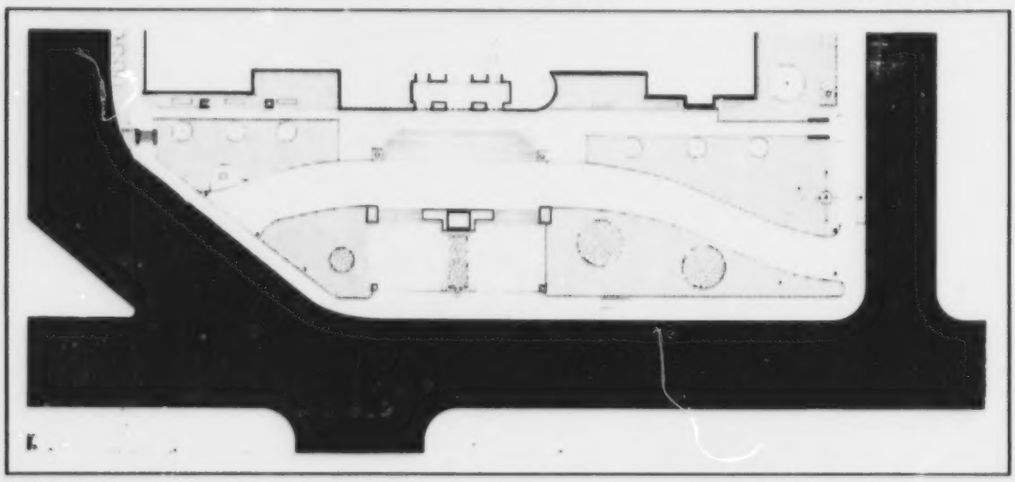
Section



Surface



Public/Private



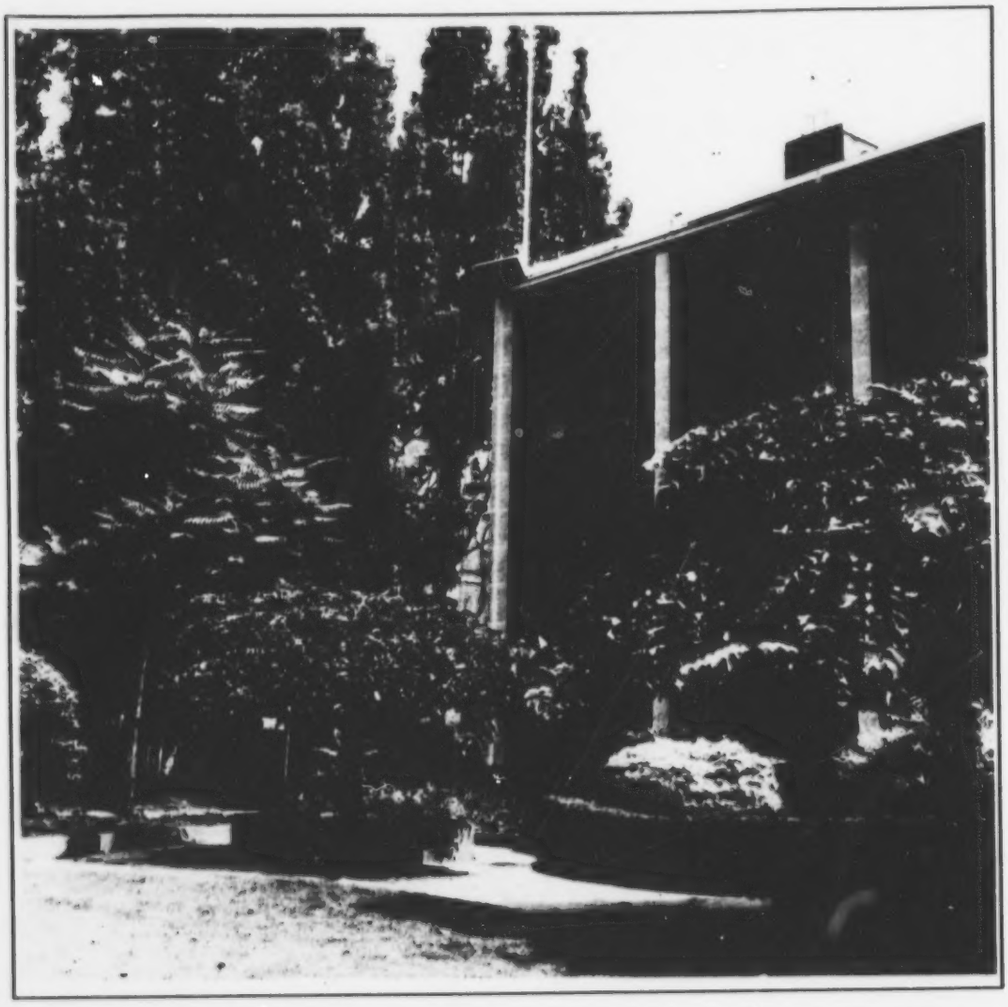
Plan

The war monument creates two zones: a front space between itself and the street, and a rear space between itself and the large ceremonial stairs of the Old City Hall. This back space forms the location for a ceremonial drive and reception which cuts across the forecourt as a black asphalt strip, with a change of material at the cenotaph area. The landform of the forecourt is raised at the street edge forming a seating wall with strips of green lawn and ornamental planting circles. Along with special light standards and the flag mast, these aspects give the forecourt a civic and urban importance yet the compressed space and its proximity to the street decreases the potential effectiveness of this forecourt.

The existing edge to Queen Street, although raised, could be further defined by either bushes, hedges, or built form along with a simple tree planting that would guarantee and separate the space of the street from the space of the forecourt, and to allow the space to be claimed by the building, not the street.

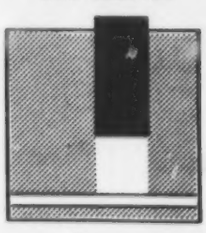
The existing tree planting running along the face of the building seems to reduce the space as an ornamental addition. The space is further reduced perceptually by the intrusion of the environmental effects of the car exhaust and the noise of heavy traffic. Effectively missing is a landscaping idea in which the essential elements of the forecourt could be coherently located. The space of the forecourt could be intensified if its edges could take advantage of the neighbouring forecourts of the City Hall and Osgoode Hall to set up similar elements to strengthen the perception of the Old City Hall forecourt as a part of a larger system running along the north side of Queen Street.

Forecourt

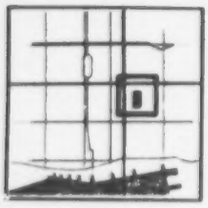


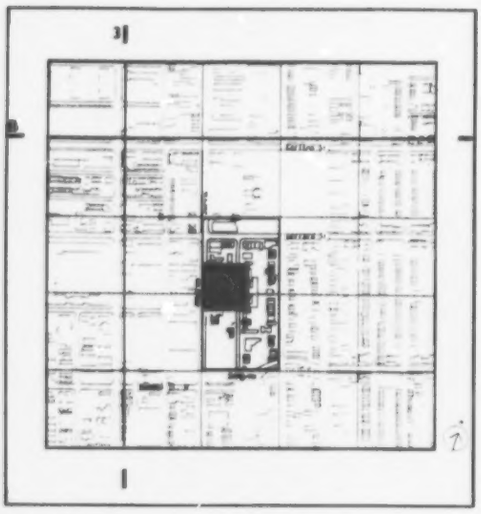
Ownership:	Public Institution
Building Use:	Family Court Building
Frontage:	89m
Depth:	21m
Area:	1,507sm
Form:	60% Soft Surface: lawn, flower beds, trees, planters 40% Hard Surface: concrete lay-by, pavers
Edges:	North: adjoining private property (building) South: adjoining private property (lawn) East: sponsor building (main facade) West: Jarvis Street
Use:	car drop-off at main entrance sitting
System:	adjacent building setbacks align with smaller entrance setback of sponsor building

311 Jarvis

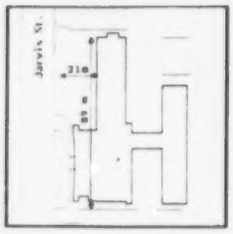


Forecourt

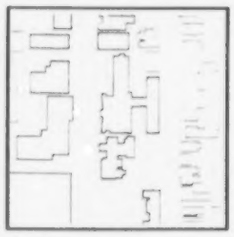




Context

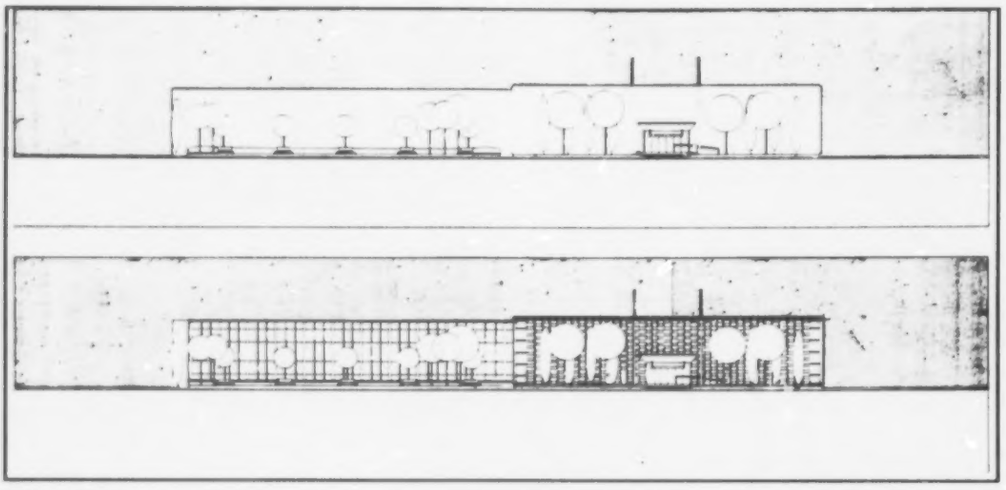


Site



Pattern

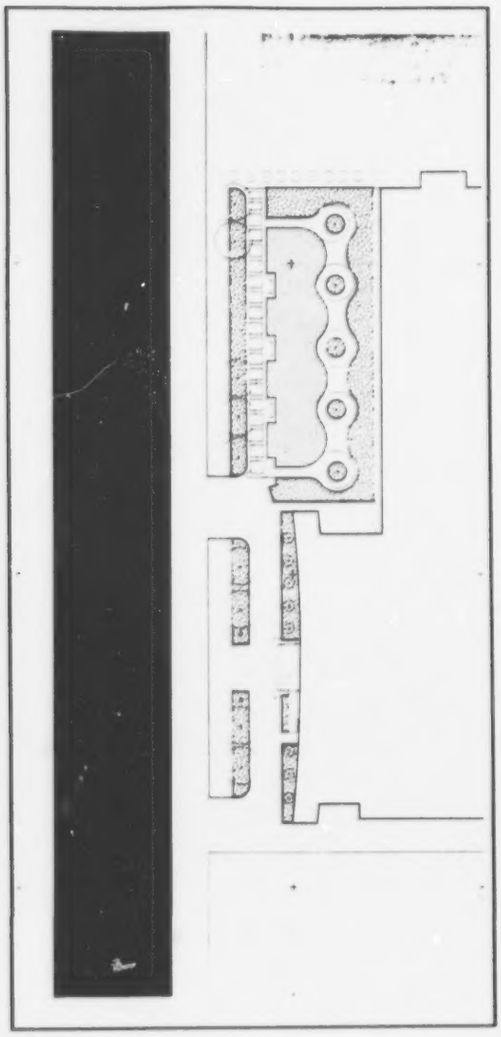
Ownership



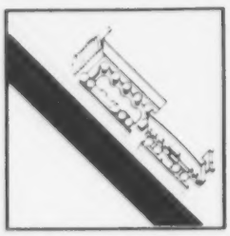
Elevations

This site is situated between two north / south streets. The principal face fronts onto Jarvis Street and presents a wall condition creating a narrow entrance forecourt aligned with the existing residential setbacks. Adjacent to the entrance forecourt is a second deeper space, an extension of the first space and framed by a two storey building face.

The forecourt of the Family Court Building offers its users a place of relief and quiet away from the immediate public space of the street in a setting sympathetic to their special needs. The overall modulation and scale of the building responds to the different conditions of the site, of adjacencies and edges. The space of the forecourt facing west along Jarvis Street creates a series of landscaped edges that screen the street and initiate a movement into the building.

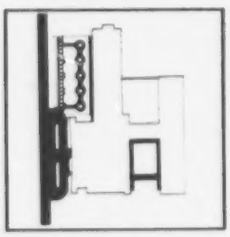


Plan

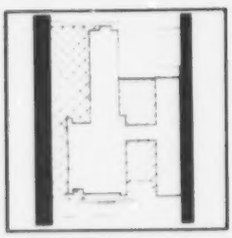


Volumetric

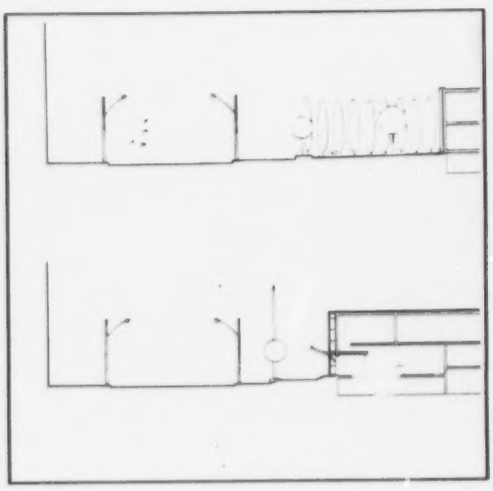
Use



Surface



Public/Private



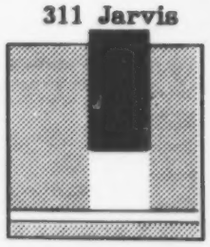
Sections

The effect of the raised planter at the edge of the public sidewalk and the ornamental small trees create an edge and parallel walkway within the forecourt. Along this forecourt's internal passage are equally spaced sitting benches in a green lawn. Moving further back into the garden, six raised planters with centrally placed low understory weeping trees create an undulating pattern and walkway.

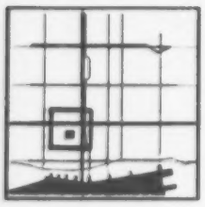
The immediate face of the building is separated and distinguished from the forecourt by a narrow paved strip. A parallel line of hedges and ornamental shrubbery initiates an organization of layers within the landscape design that operates independently of the internal and external structure of the building. Within the tight setback condition, this autonomous composition for the landscape effectively creates visual separation from the street, an area of openness and areas of closure and shade.

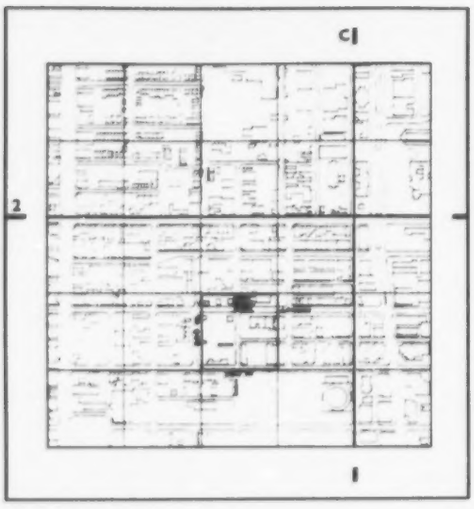
The screen of layers of landscape also sets up a system of movement and access from the street. The main entrance forecourt contains a driveway, lying behind a line of trees. The slight curvature of the entrance front and projecting canopy mark clear entrance into the building while the main garden is connected to the north.

311 Jarvis



Forecourt

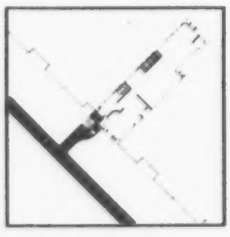




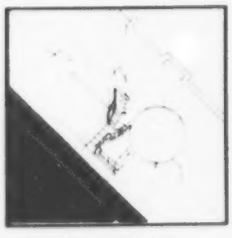
Context

Site

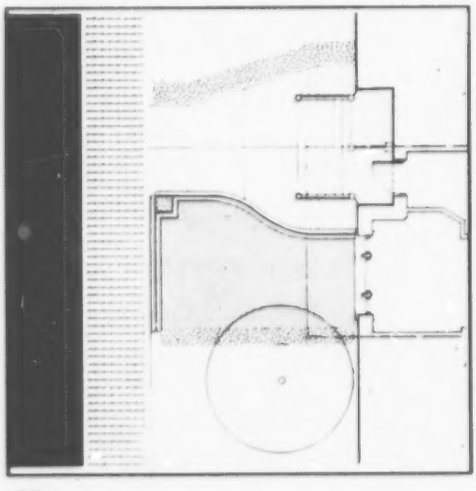
Use



Movement

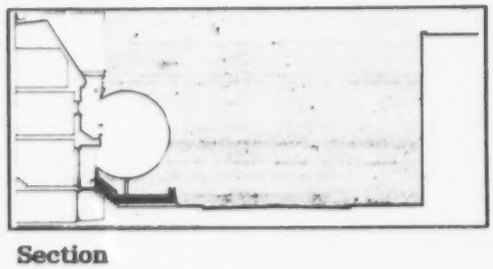


Volumetric



Plan

Elevation



Section

The John Street rowhouse, located on the east side of a north/south street in Toronto, is a special example of a typical housing type and front lawn found in Toronto. This block of John Street, just north of the Skydome Stadium, contains mixed uses of offices, commercial use, restaurants, and rooming houses. 119 John Street is an example of a single family house type in the downtown core of Toronto that is occupied on the second and third floor by the proprietors of the office on the ground floor.

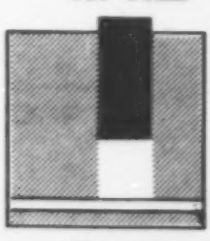
The small front yard contains a well balanced composition of limited paved walk from the public street to the steps and covered entry porch. A carefully manicured lawn with surrounding railing and side hedge suggests a domestic image and a personal proprietorship's attention.

Where this type of house becomes commercial in other locations, its forecourt can sometimes become an area of minimum care, where paving replaces grass, possibly doubling for a parking spot, and the space is made "maintenance free". Conversely the modest dimension of the forecourt can also allow an outside care area for a restaurant. These areas present an opportunity for good design of hard-surfaced forecourts that can positively add to the open space of the street.

This range of conditions is apparent on John Street. The forecourt of 119 John Street acts in many ways as a restorative to the street and develops an elaborate sequence of movement through its placement of walks, railings, hedges and stairs, in a composition that allos the double use of home and office to coexist in a happy mix.

Ownership:	**Private**
Building Use:	**Office and Residential**
Frontage:	**5m**
Depth:	**5.5m**
Area:	**27.5sm**
Form:	**65% Soft Surface: lawn, hedge** **35% Hard Surface: concrete walk, railing, wood steps**
Edges:	**North: adjoining private property (lawn)** **South: adjoining private property (paved)** **East: sponsor building (main facade)** **West: John Street**
Use:	**Entrance**
System:	**aligns with adjacent building setbacks**

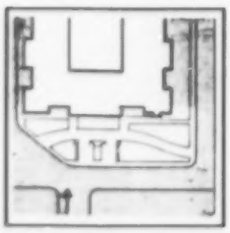
119 John



Forecourt

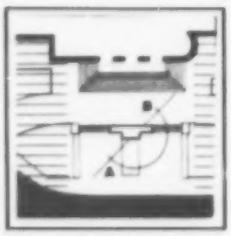
Toronto

Old City Hall



Plan

View



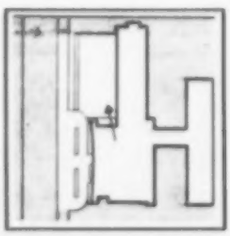
Detail Plan

View

The forecourt is bounded on the north side by the Old City Hall with its clock tower axial to Bay Street, the forecourt is left open on its three other sides to bordering streets. The one wing of the forecourt is partially cut off by the deflection of Bay Street. The elements that form the space of the forecourt and structure its organization reflect its special and ceremonial functions. The cenotaph, cermonial drive, planting beds, flags and lamp standards create a civic character appropriate to Old City Hall and its use.

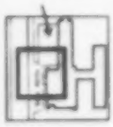
Toronto

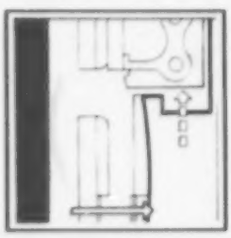
311 Jarvis



Plan

View





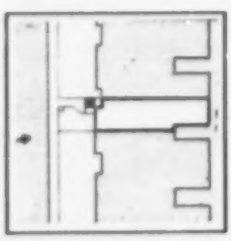
Detail Plan

View

The low two storey scale of the building that forms the back face of the forecourt is formed by a simple device of two staggered walls. This staggered effect creates two kinds of spaces that modulate distances from the street. This affects how the building and forecourt are understood as an entrance and at the same time as a more separate space with corresponding landscape elements, such as ornamental strees, hedges and walls that band together to create a screen to the street.

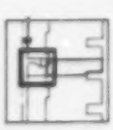
Toronto

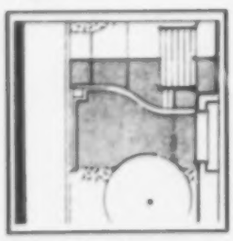
119 John



Plan

View





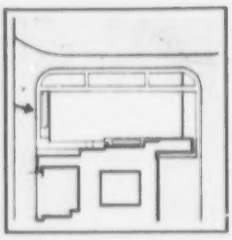
Detail Plan

View

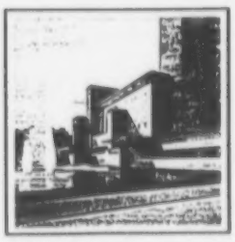
This rowhouse with its front lawn as forecourt is a smaller example of many residential house types found in the city. It shows in a clear way how an array of small walls, railings, and hedges can produce a potent concentrated set of relationships between the public sidewalk and the private living space of the house. The simple and concentrated maintenance evident in the small lawn is exceptional and points to the potential of other lawns located along the street.

Hilversum

The nature of solemn receptions, processions and ceremonies are reflected in the design and sequence of entry of the forecourt facing the Hilversum Town Hall. The forecourt space is centred around a large reflecting pool, so that all approaches to the building entrance are made by walking around the pool. A covered colonnade offers an alternative route in bad weather. This entrance leads to a monumental stair under a projected entrance vestible. The forecourt face of the Town Hall makes the circuitous movement around the water forecourt clear and ordered as a rich experience of movement into the building.

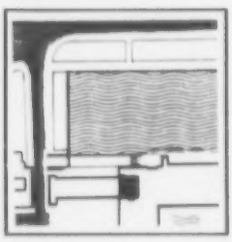


Plan



View

Town Hall

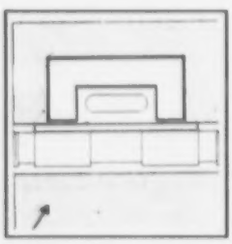


Detail Plan

View

Rome

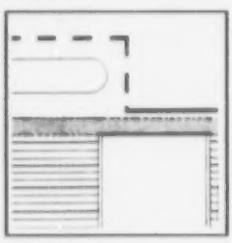
The monumental nature of this postal building with its continuous portico along the front of the forecourt depends on a clear system of functions reflected by the triad of sloped stairs that connect to a portico and move through an integrated sequence of spaces that form part of the building's organization and publicness. The design of the forecourt space allows a visual extension into the building, with planted spaces recessed between the access stairs and the edges of the street sidewalk.



Plan

View

Palazzo Postale

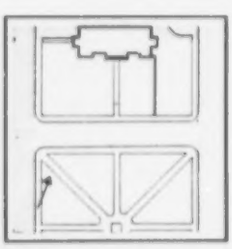


Detail Plan

View

Brantford

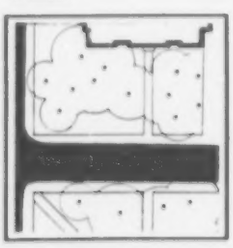
This courthouse originally was designed with Victoria Square as a large extended forecourt space. The monument to Chief Joseph Brant is part of an original axis of alignment to the courthouse. Presently the courthouse has its own treed lawn forecourt that is bounded by a street that separates it from Victoria Square. The approach to the courthouse is arrived at through a modest sidewalk and set of stairs. The courthouse building, like the other surrounding buildings on Victoria Square, contribute through differences in scale, architectural style and degrees of separation, to an extension of the space.



Plan

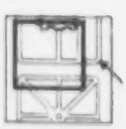
View

Courthouse

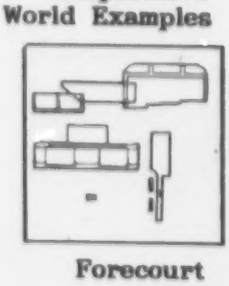


Detail Plan

View

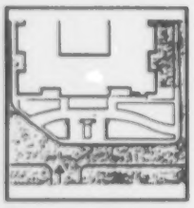


Comparative World Examples

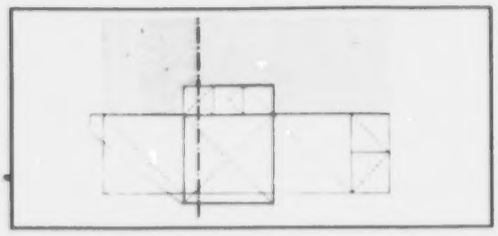


Forecourt

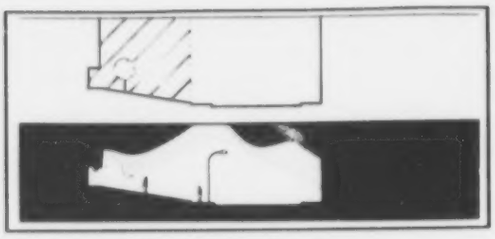
Toronto



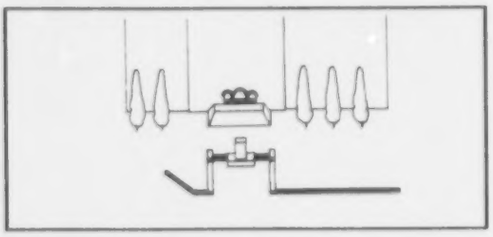
Old City Hall



Proportion



Day and Night Sections

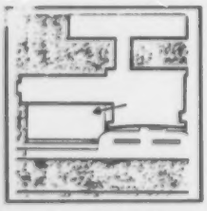


Elements

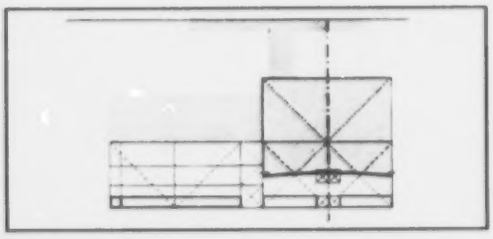
View

Detail Section

Toronto



311 Jarvis



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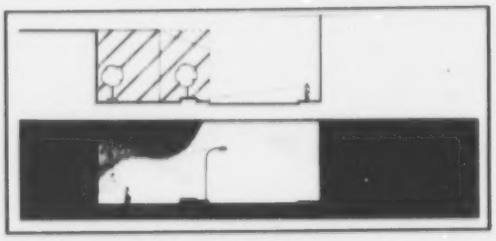

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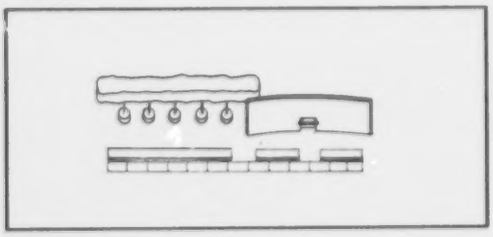

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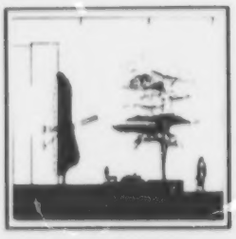

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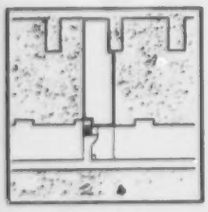
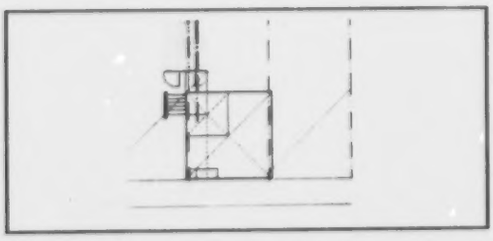


119 John



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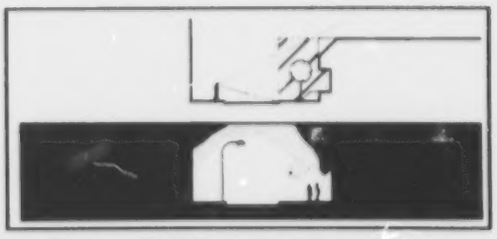

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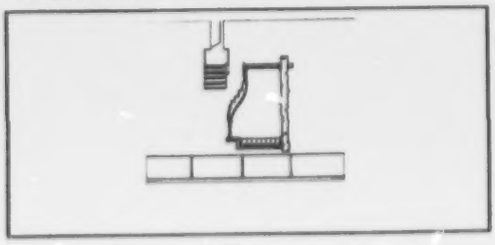

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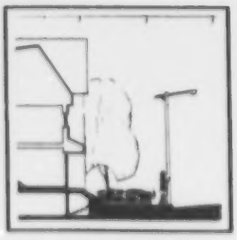

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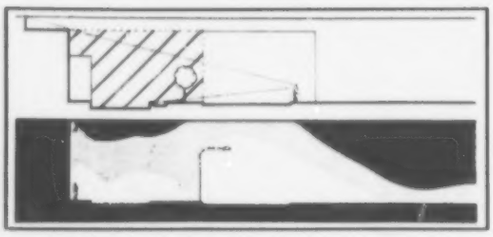
Hilversum



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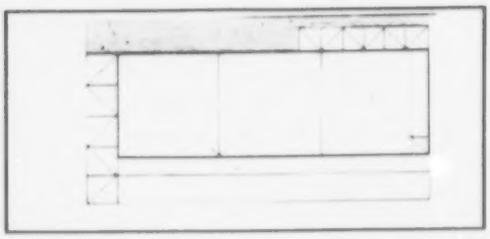

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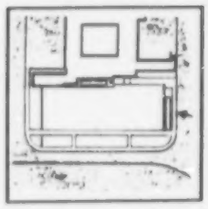

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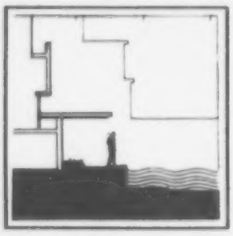

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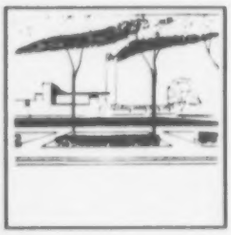

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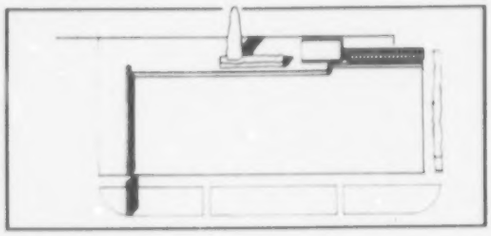
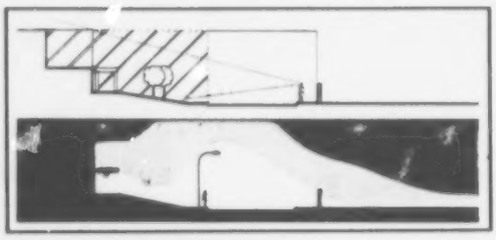


Elements

Rome



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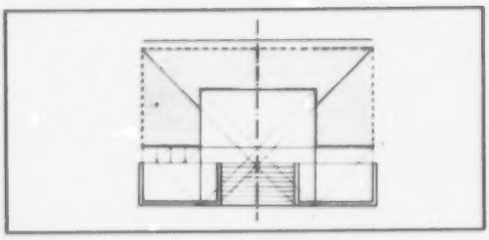

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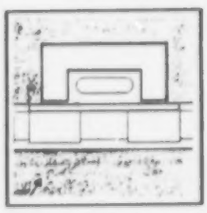
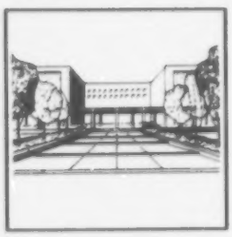


Palazzo Postale

Detail Section



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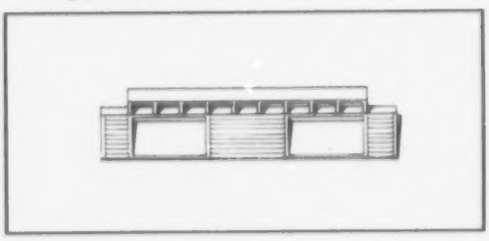
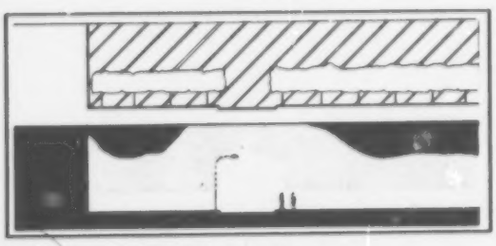


Elements

Brantford



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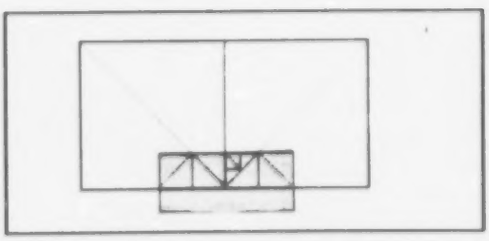

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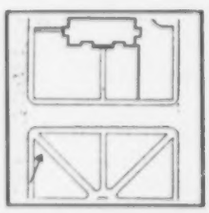
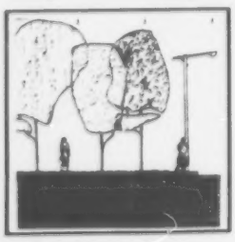


Courthouse



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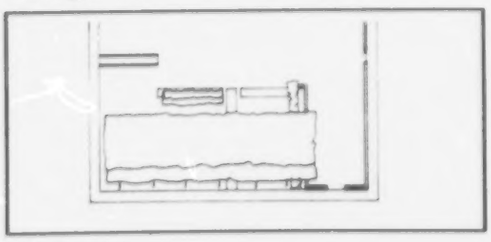
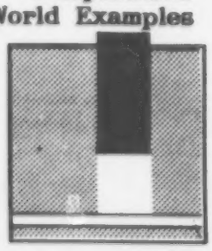


Elements

Comparative World Examples



Forecourt

Observations and Comparison

The forecourt of the postal building in Rome exemplifies a use of a strong landform as a structured / inclined series of walkways with recessed planting areas. The sloped forecourt begins a sequence that culminates in a strong movement from the public sidewalk into a continuous linear portico. This portico stands between the forecourt and the building proper. It is well illuminated and consolidates the scale of the forecourt to a built element, ameliorating the more monumental scale of the post office proper.

The cenotaph and stair act as the focus of **the forecourt of Old City Hall** which organizes the space and sets a stage for ceremonial occasions. The effect of these pieces are weakened by the lack of strong definition at the street and the small size of the actual space. The street traffic, noise and exhaust overwhelm the forecourt. This could be partially tempered by providing a distinct edge to the public sidewalk.

The forecourt of Hilversum City Hall, where the open space becomes a water element, mirrors the refined massing and detailing of the building in its considered design of the graceful sequence of movement around the reflecting pool. This movement presents a special focus on sequence that includes a walk around the forecourt, with a parallel covered way reaching the staircase to the entry. The arrival by car follows a similar sequentially ordered entry. The Hilversum example, unlike the Old City Hall of Toronto, separates and clarifies the function of a public building, and develops the sequence of entry into an enriching experience.

The design of the **Family Court Building forecourt** illustrates an example of an open space facing onto a busy street. The space of the forecourt is aligned with the neighbouring residential buildings. The forecourts of those buildings were once generous but have become quite small because of the widening of Jarvis Street. The forecourt on Jarvis Street is staggered to perform two separate functions. The shallow recess respects an existing setback and deals with entry and the car drop-off in a direct manner. The deeper space is then able to function solely as a separate landscaped space. Its design uses planting, seating, special paving and ornamental trees to create a defined edge and a very different environment from that of the adjacent busy street.

Similarly, the small front yard of the rowhouse at **119 John Street** consolidates its entry simply, defines its edge to the busy street with a low hedge and fence, and is able to set apart a specific area for a manicured lawn and small tree.

Although the forecourt of the **Brantford County Courthouse** has more space between the building face and the street, a similar straightforward entry of a simple walk and steps allows a large area for a green lawn planted with mature trees that presents a refined face to both the courthouse building and the square across the street.

Observations and Principles

1. **Place Creation and Modification : Limits to Open Space**

- The volume of the forecourt as the space between the front face of the building and the public sidewalk is limited by three means:

  its balance and integration with the spatial organization of the sponsor building

  its relationship to adjacent open spaces

  its proportion to the heights of both the sponsor building and the facing building across the street

2. **Place Definition**

- the forecourt space can support and continue existing patterns that occur along the public street by a repetition of similar setback dimensions and of some elements that promote a continuity of the adjacent forecourts

- The interior of the sponsor building and the exterior of the forecourt can be connected by intermediary devices such as loggias, raised terraces, socles, porticoes, steps, arcades and entrance canopies.

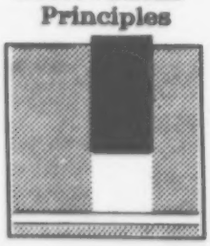
- The position of principal rooms and facade elements of the building will reinforce its relationship to its forecourt. The extension of this spatial order of the interior of the sponsor building can be used in structuring the composition of the elements of the open space.

3. **Place of Possibilities :**
   Space in relationship to objects, to each other and to a whole

- The forecourt can be designed as a separate outdoor "room". While the forecourt must establish a clear and elaborated entry sequence to the sponsor building, this should not prevent the creation of an interesting and memorable space.

- The edges should be able to establish a strong relationship with the street. They should define the site of the open space and the define the street. The diversity of elements should create a range of places, sites and conditions.

Observations Principles



Forecourt

Courtyard

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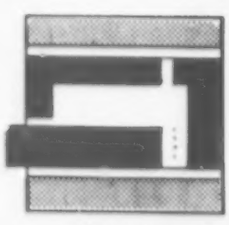
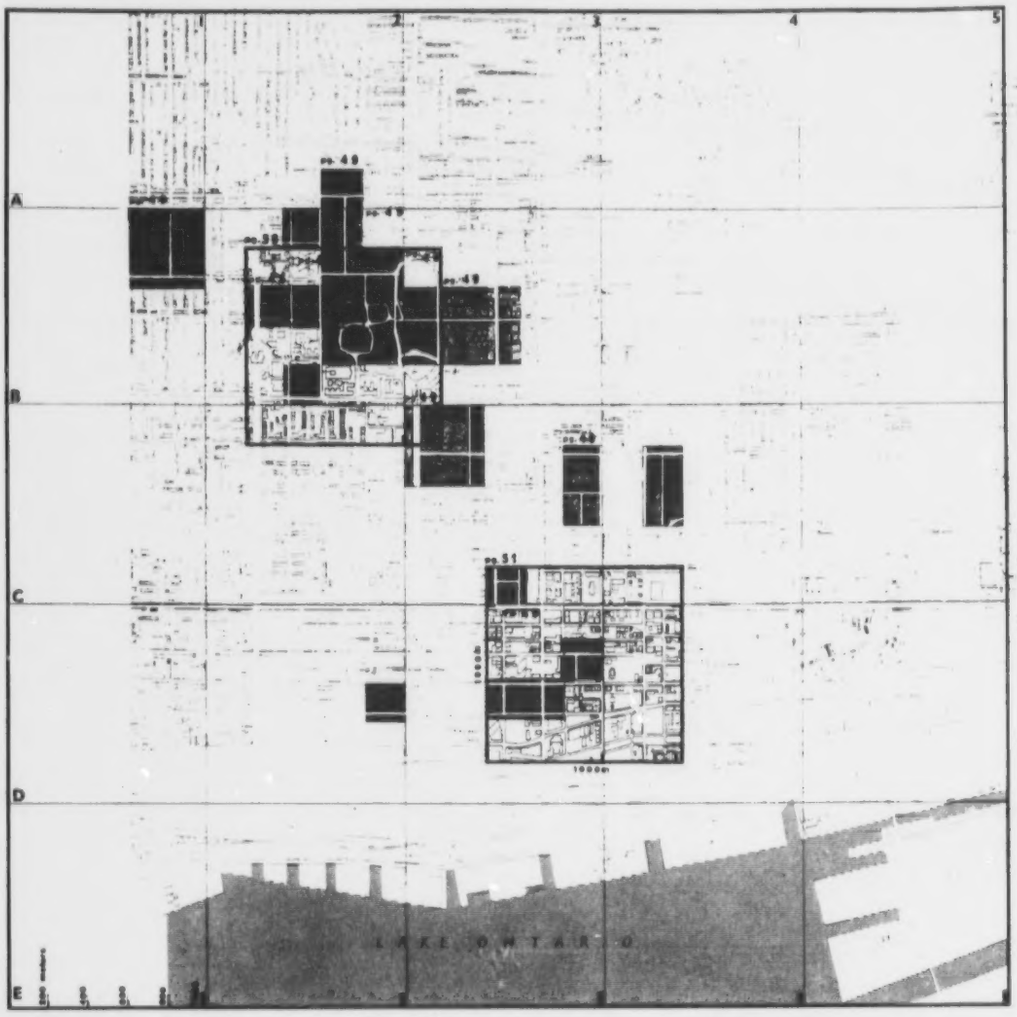




COURTYARDS **M A P P I N G**

Courtyards

Definition An open space substantially enclosed on all of its four sides by built form.

Location Interiors of city block with or without street frontage. It should always be well connected to public movement systems and avoid dead ends and isolated locations.

Size Size should be determined by the height of the surrounding buildings to ensure that the space receives good sunlight.

Edge The quality of the courtyard will be determined by the design of its walls. The wall proportions should admit sunlight during high use times and provide overlook conditions.

Landscape The organization of the courtyard should provide at least two clear public accesses. The courtyard should be designed as an enclosed room with its own specific balance of paved and planted areas.

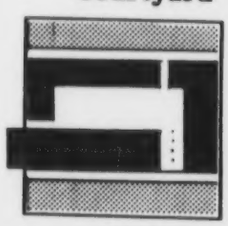
Use Playgrounds, cafes, casual sitting

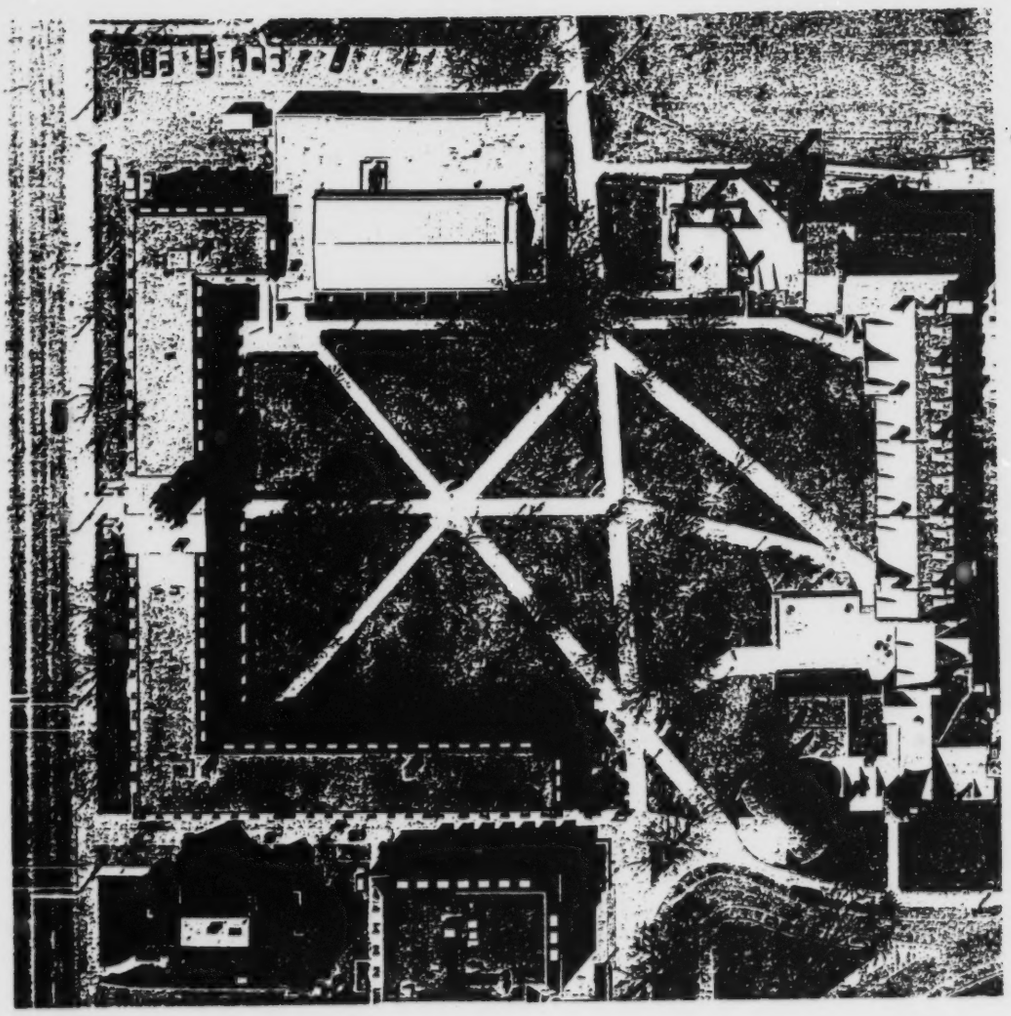
Weather The building edge should allow for adequate sunlight and mitigate prevailing winds.

System Courtyards can connect to public streets and form part of a continuous pedestrian system of movement, ie. the University of Toronto downtown campus.

Other Avoid dead end courtyards. Close courtyards after user hours if not in a regular public route.

Courtyard



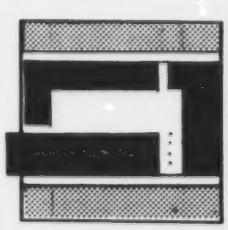


Definition

The courtyard is an open space that is substantially enclosed on all of its edges by built form, and open to the sky above. The courtyard is approached by exterior pedestrian walks or through a building.

The courtyard placed in the city grid is normally found in the interior of the block. Its removal from the public street effectively distances it from the public realm. Its presence can be virtually unnoticed from its nearest streets. While this condition may give the courtyard a distinct "room-ness", the courtyard can also become an isolated and neglected space if its connection to the street is not part of a legible through route.

The courtyard occupies a middle position between the absolute shelter of the building and the absolute open-ness of the street. The courtyard can filter out the noise of the street, the discomfort of the wind and the cold temperatures. While its edges are principally made by the immediate surroundings of built form, the courtyard can thus be given a specific character and quality through its landscape and sculptural elements.



Variants

Courtyards have two different origins. The courtyard may be consciously designed in its origin, and is most likely part of an institutional complex. (William Lyon Mackenzie Building, Knox College, the Mackenzie Block). Alternatively, the courtyard is formed by an ad hoc system of adding buildings over a period of time. The University College courtyard is a fortuitous result of the addition of several buildings over a period of many years. Toronto General Hospital is an unfortunate result of courtyards virtually sealed off by countless additions and renovations, so that their origins have been completely hidden.

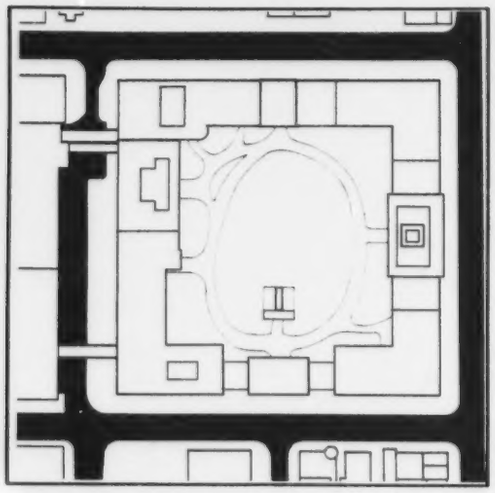
Courtyards are normally found in institutions, ie. university academic buildings, college residences, hospital complexes, and government office buildings. Courtyards found in commercial buildings are rare in the city; the shops on courtyards depend on an established and exclusive clientele.(ie. Hazelton Lanes)

Adjacencies / Edges

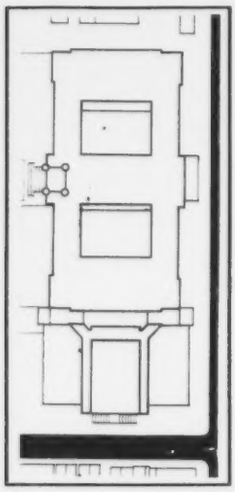
Each edge of the courtyard is substantially enclosed by built forms. The way in which the courtyard can be reached by public routes from the street highly influence its public or private nature. The character of the courtyard is highly dependent on its surrounding built edges. The public courtyard must be well connected visibly to the adjacent streets by at least two access points.

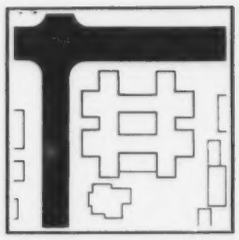
The courtyard possesses enormous potential for the integration of the ground floor of the sponsor building or buildings with its open space. Mediating devices like arcades serve to bridge the outside / inside division and better enable the establishment of a useful programming for the courtyard.

The establishment of a courtyard requires that the exterior walls forming its edges be given a dual role, that of building envelope, and of open space envelope. Where a courtyard is formed by the exterior walls of separate buildings, the correspondence between those walls should be considered in the design of a cohesive courtyard space.

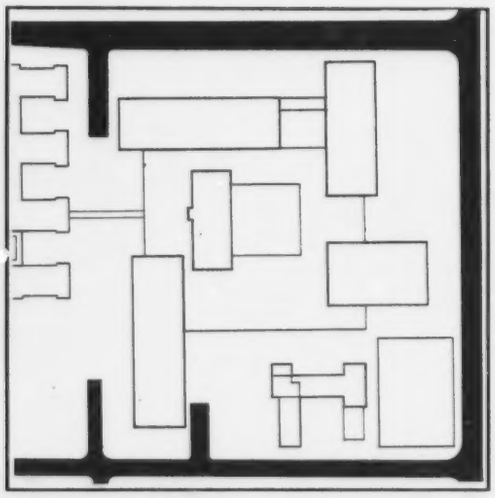


Ryerson College

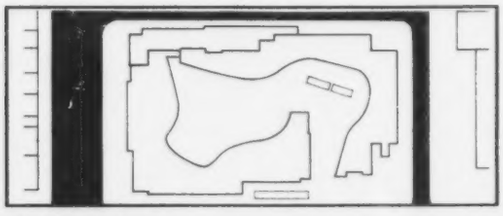




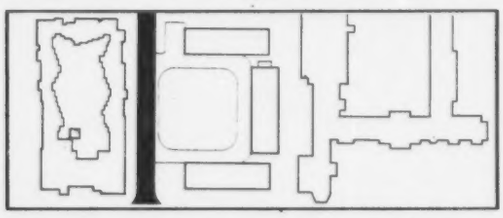
Graduate Residence
Bloor at St. George



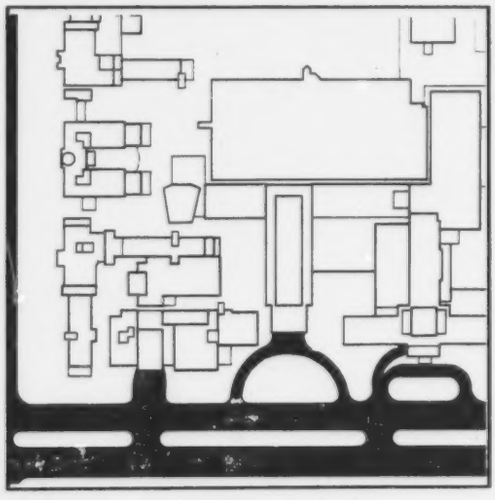
MacDonald Block
Bay St. and Wellesley St.



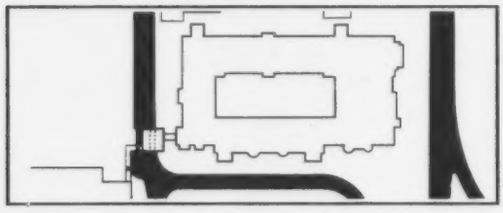
New College
Willcocks St. at Spadina Avenue



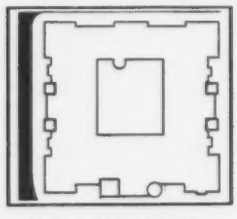
Massey College, Trinity College
Hoskins Avenue



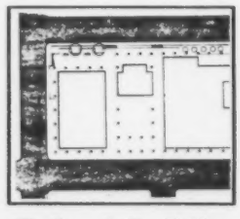
Toronto General Hospital



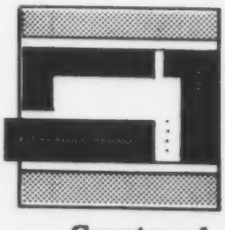
Hart House
King's College Circle



Old City Hall



Federal Building
36 Adelaide St. E.



Courtyard

Facilities/Use: Intensity and Frequency

The courtyard is dependent on the character and programming of the "sponsor" buildings on its edges to give the open space an appropriate use and occupation. In large building programmes, the courtyard presents, in functional terms, a source of light, limited view and air to indoor rooms that would otherwise be buried in large internalized floor areas.

Access and movement through the courtyard as secondary routes are important uses to give a constant presence of people in the space.

Access

Strong access routes to and from the public street by pedestrians make the courtyard understood as inherently public, less isolated and possibly unsafe. Courtyards, like that at University College, that form part of a through but possibly circuitous route, will have the advantage of the limited and muted sounds of people walking through, without disturbing the essential quietude of the space.

Courtyards reached through buildings require a high degree of control and monitoring. These open spaces are generally provided for exclusive or private use, but often are not used because of the evident safety concerns in a dead-ended space.

The effectiveness of the courtyard as a public open space is dependent mainly upon the placement and publicness of its access points.

Spatial Structure: Surface, Form and Vegetation

Because the courtyard is an open space type that can accurately be considered an outdoor room, its surface treatment becomes very important in determining zones of that room, areas for sitting, for moving past, and for lingering.

The courtyard in its most urban state is mostly paved with controlled landscape pieces. In a more pastoral and retreat oriented space, as in the University College courtyard, the largest portion of the courtyard is given over to a "green" with limited pavement and seating areas around its borders.

Ownership: Public

Building Use: Federal Offices

Frontage: 17m

Depth: 21m

Area: 357sm

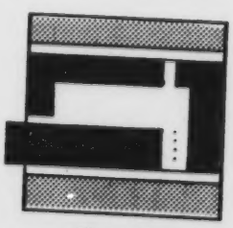
Form:
25% Soft Surface: trees, planters
75% Hard Surface: concrete pavers

Edges:
North: Office Building
South: Office Building/Adelaide Street
East: Office Building
West: Office Building

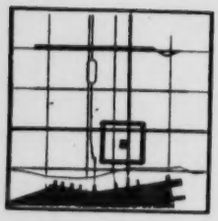
Use:
passage through block
entrance
casual (eating lunch, sitting)

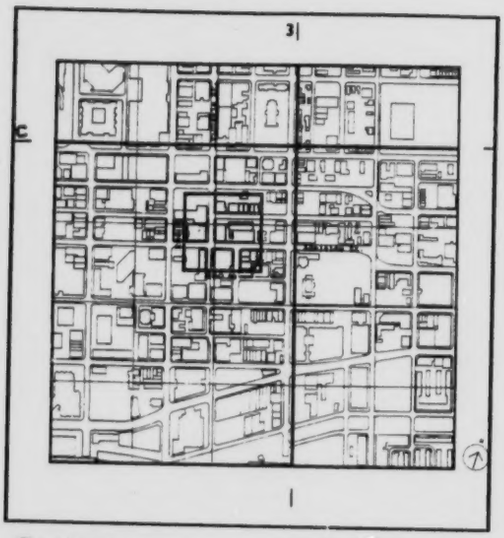
System:
pedestrian connection between Adelaide and Lombard Streets
axial connection with Toronto Street

Federal Building
36 Adelaide Street East

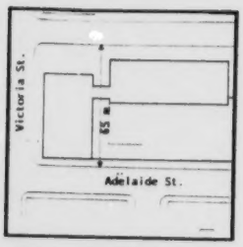


Courtyard



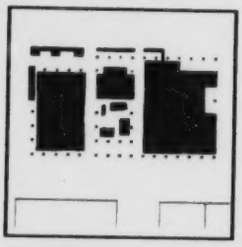


Context

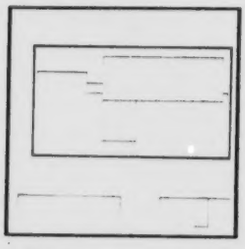


Site and Size

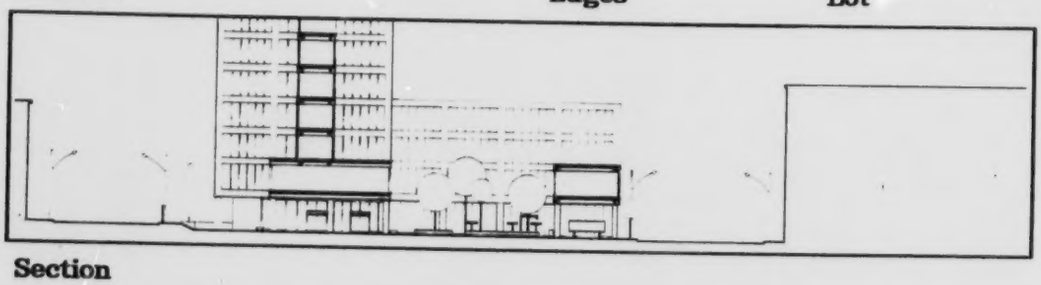
Volumetric



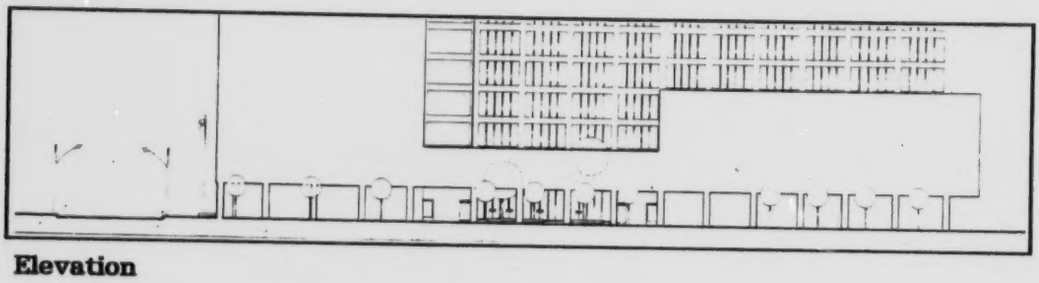
Edges



Lot



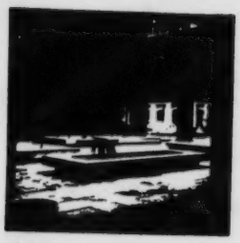
Section



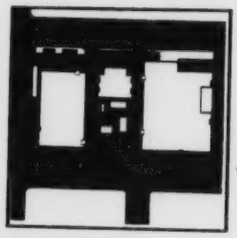
Elevation

The William Lyon Mackenzie Federal Building at 36 Adelaide Street East houses government offices for taxation and for Canada Post. This modern complex of buildings contains a small secluded courtyard which unifies the built composition, and provides a focus for pedestrian movement through the block.

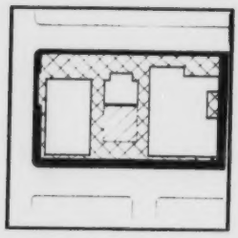
The courtyard is defined by a podium which is raised above ground level, allowing movement beneath it. The office towers rise from this podium, stepping back from the edge of the courtyard. The courtyard is separated from Adelaide Street on the south side by the continuation of the podium which hovers at the second story, allowing clear views between the courtyard and the street. The east and west edges of the courtyard are marked by the mid-rise office blocks which step back from the courtyard. On the north side is a taller office block which is also set back from the edge of the courtyard, thereby reducing its presence to the courtyard users.



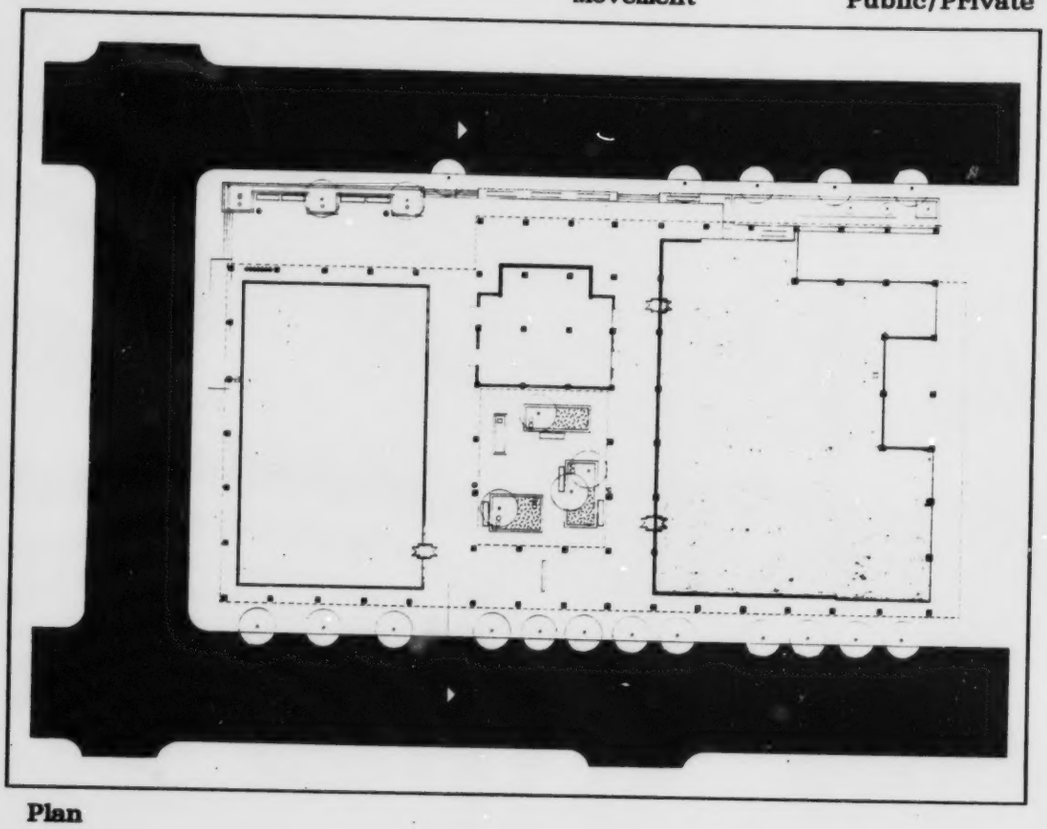
Use



Movement



Public/Private



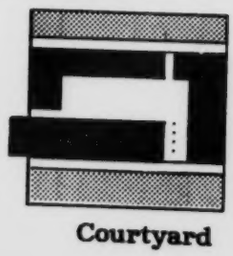
Plan

The courtyard's position adjacent to all three of these office blocks gives it an important role. The entrances to the office lobbies as well as the proximity of the courtyard to the street ensures a steady flow of people, who use the courtyard to cut through the block, sit and relax, or eat lunch.

Access to the courtyard occurs from the street at three main points, the primary one being off Adelaide Street. Two smaller passages occur on the north side off Lombard Street, flanking the main floor lobby space.

The courtyard itself is a relatively small 17m by 21m, with a hard surface. The space contains a fountain and three islands of vegetation, bordered by black marble seating. The intensity of the spatial configuration and the unique lighting conditions make this courtyard space an oasis in the midst of the dense urban fabric.

Federal Building
36 Adelaide Street East



Courtyard

Ownership: Public

Building Use: Academic facilities

Frontage: 48m

Depth: 62m

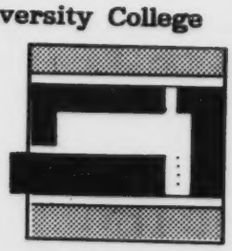
Area: 2976sm

Form:
70% Soft Surface: lawn, trees, flower beds
30% Hard Surface: stone pavers

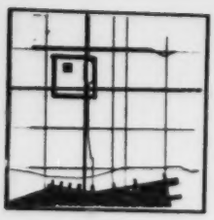
Edges:
North: 1950 addition to University College
South: Main building
East: Main building
West: Main Building, access through to adjacent open spaces

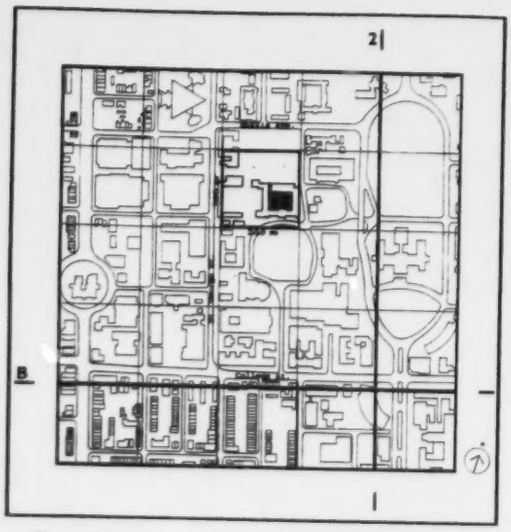
System: extensive network of public spaces throughout the University of Toronto campus

University College

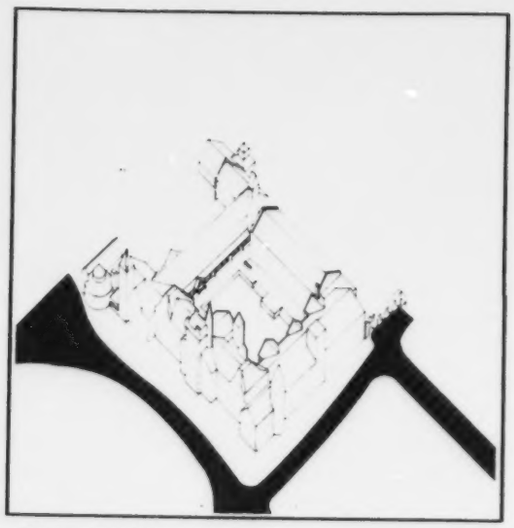


Courtyard

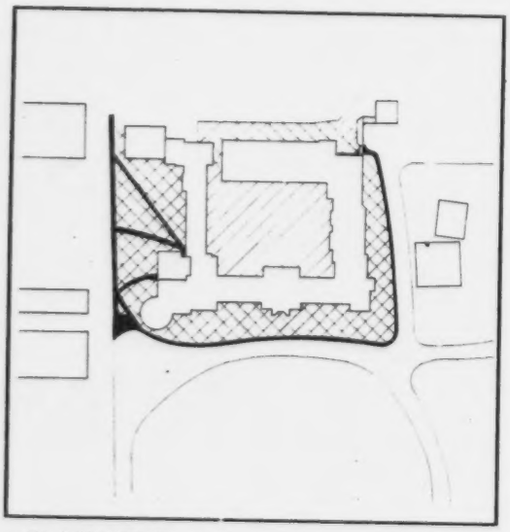




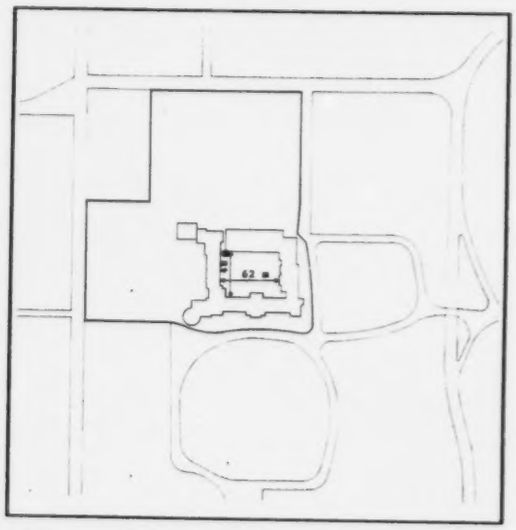
Context



Volumetric



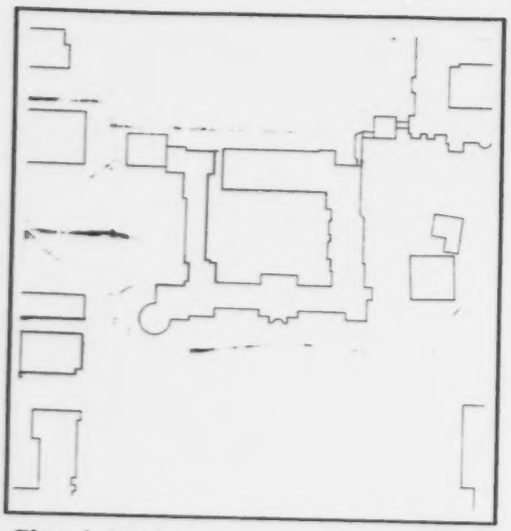
Public/Private



Lot and Size

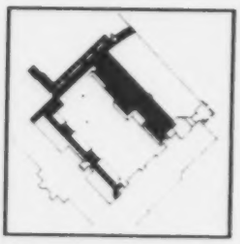
University College at the University of Toronto is the oldest part of the St. George Campus. This college occupies a prominent axial position on King's College Circle, the main formal route of the St. George campus. The main building of University College houses the academic and formal spaces of the college. This building, built in stages, currently encloses a courtyard, or quadrangle, which serves as an enclosed formal outdoor ceremonial space.

The courtyard is surrounded on all four sides by the various building wings, two of which have deep arcades. Intermediary edges are created by the hard surface perimeter which accomodates pedestrian traffic through the courtyard, and the ring of trees which surrounds the sunken central lawn. The space is used often as a route between the different sides of the building, and the courtyard is indeed a destination in itself. The secluded nature of the space and the rich textures of the adjacent architecture make it ideal for relaxation.

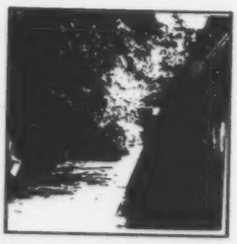


Site / Pattern

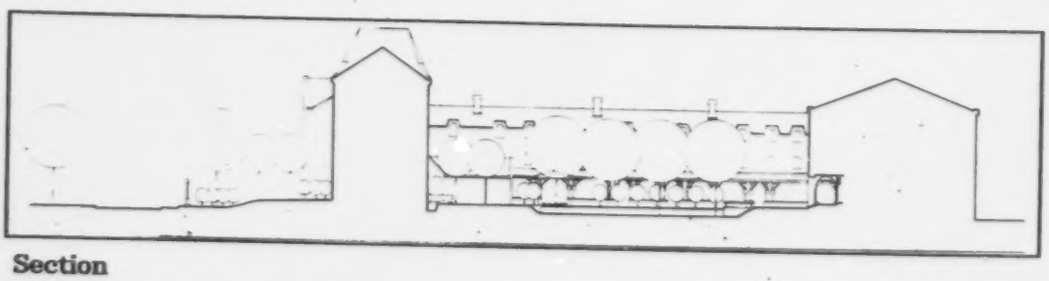
Use



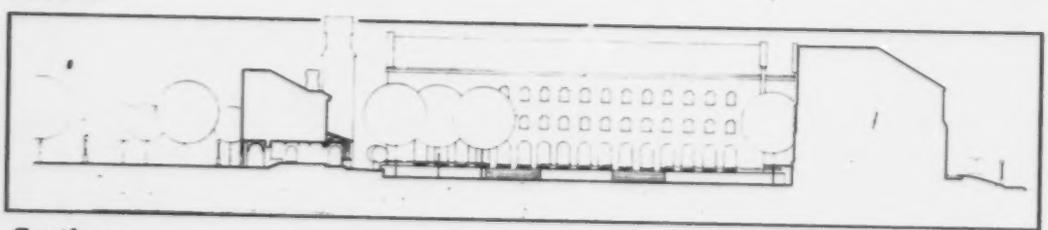
Movement



Use



Section

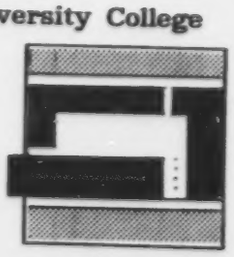


Section

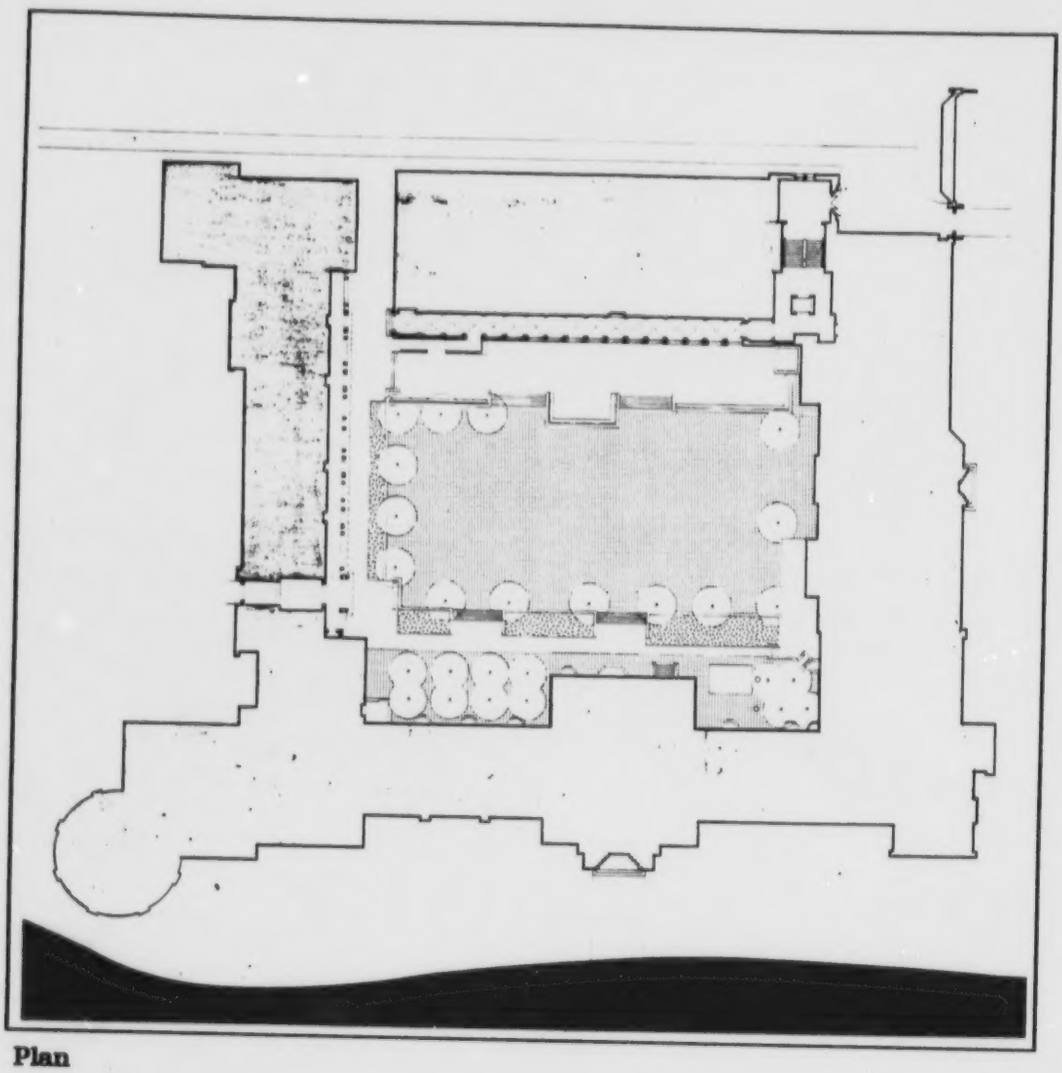
Access to the courtyard occurs from the building itself, and from two outdoor passages. The primary passage on the west side connects this space with another courtyard which serves the residence buildings, and it also connects with a linear green space which joins the various University College residences and service buildings. The secondary passage, which is little used, connects the north side of the courtyard with the back campus, through a set of iron gates.

This second passage was created when the north wing of the building was built in the fifties, and it effectively blocked the University College courtyard from the larger system of open spaces which exists adjacent to it. At the same time as it cuts off the courtyard from this system, the new addition also increases the definition of the space itself. The problem of pedestrian flow through the space occurs because of the limitations of the outdoor passages.

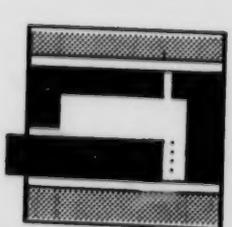
University College



Courtyard

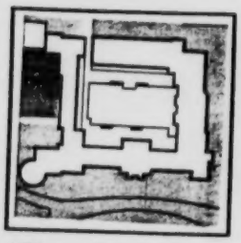


Plan



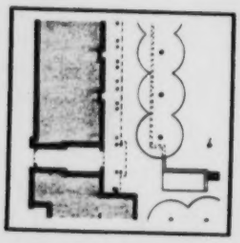
Toronto

University College



Plan

View



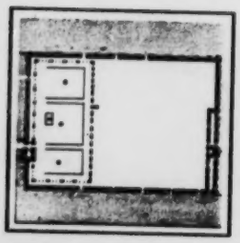
Detail Plan

View

The courtyard of **University College** is a sunken space which is enclosed by the main academic buildings of the college. This space is one in a series of courtyards which constitute a system covering most of the older parts of the campus. The University College courtyard is connected to a linear greenspace which runs adjacent to it, providing a route to the residences and the other college buildings. The courtyard itself has a perimeter of hard surface which encloses the sunken treed lawn. The space is arcaded on two of its four sides, and access is achieved through two passages, as well as through the building itself.

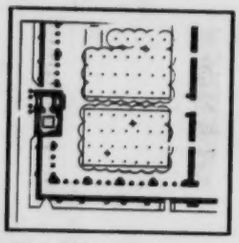
Cordoba

The Mosque



Plan

View

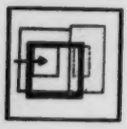


Detail Plan

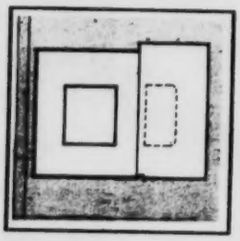
View

The Great Mosque was built over a period of 900 years. It is comprised of a large public courtyard, containing a series of three islands of orange trees and fountains, which are tied to a sophisticated water irrigation system. This space has a series of public entrance ways, and the courtyard is a popular place to sit and relax. Its original use was more of an institutional nature, as it formed a natural extension of the main hall space of the Mosque. The courtyard's garden and the light walls of arabesque that separate the courtyard from the surrounding buildings are a source of light for the interiors, as well as a symbol and source of direction of movement to the garden.

Göteborg

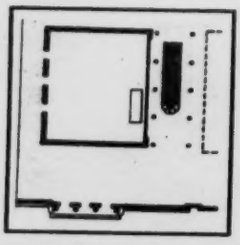


Law Courts

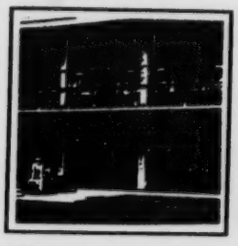


Plan

View



Detail Plan

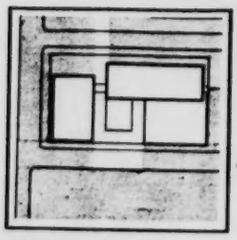


View

The **Law Courts** of Göteborg are comprised of an original building and a newer extension. The original structure contains an enclosed outdoor courtyard, while the addition by Erik Gunnar Asplund is organized around an enclosed courtyard, which creates an edge for the outdoor courtyard space. Both the original building and the extension front onto a major square, and the two retain a symbiotic relationship. Separated only by a wall of glass, light is free to penetrate from the outdoor courtyard, through the open office space, and into the new enclosed Great Hall. The Great Hall serves as a meeting place for clerks and lawyers, while the original outdoor courtyard contains sculptures, fountains, and places to sit.

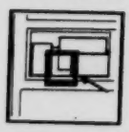
Toronto

The **Federal Building** at 36 Adelaide Street East houses a public taxation centre as well as offices for Canada Post. The building mass of this centre encloses a courtyard space which has access routes connecting it with the street to the north as well as to the south, where an axial connection exists with Toronto Street. The courtyard achieves its definition from a building podium which begins on the 2nd floor. The office blocks rise from this podium, stepping back from the courtyard to allow for light penetration. The courtyard contains trees and a water fountain, as well as black marble seating.

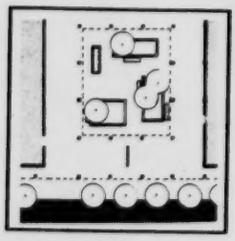


Plan

View



Federal Building
36 Adelaide E.

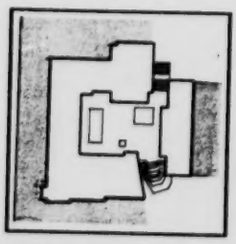


Detail Plan

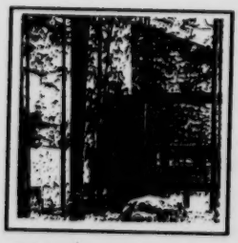
View

Säynätsalo

The **Town Hall** of Säynätsalo, designed by Alvar Aalto, contains a raised central courtyard garden, municipal offices, library, and council chambers. A large staircase connects the outdoor garden to the rugged pine treed exterior landscape below it. The configuration of the stair and the form of the buildings make the courtyard space coherent, and the space is further accentuated by the richness of materials, as well as the organization of pedestrian movement which ensures interaction between the courtyard space and the people. This garden space serves a vital role in Aalto's democratic ideal of institution and self government. It represents the world of nature, while the library and the street represent the worlds of knowledge and man.

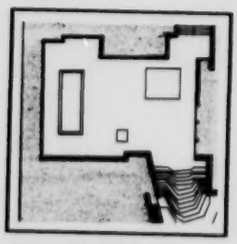


Plan

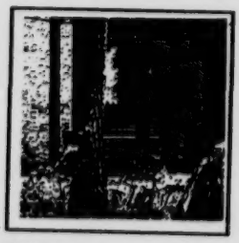


View

Town Hall



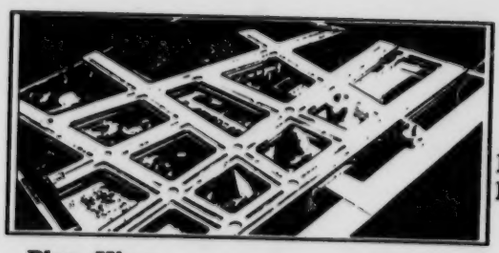
Detail Plan



View

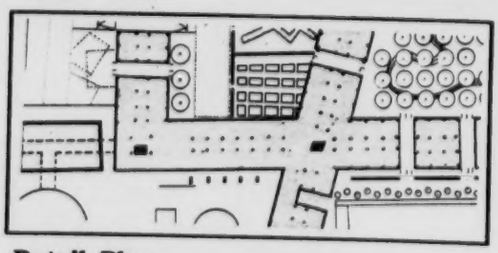
The Hague

The **European Patent Office** in the Hague, designed by Neutlings and Roodheen Architects, springs from the idea of a European Institution dealing with technical innovation. The building is organized in intersecting heads of offices, which create fourteen interior courtyard gardens. Different departments and collective services occur at the intersections. The garden spaces themselves are an integral part of the architecture, and make the building complete. Their purpose is similar to those of green urban spaces in the city, with comparable scale and functions. The gardens are open to the public, but can be closed off after dark using gates and bridges. They are also accessible to maintenance, service, and emergency personnel.



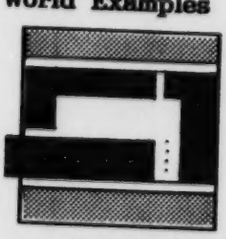
Plan View

European
Patent Office



Detail Plan

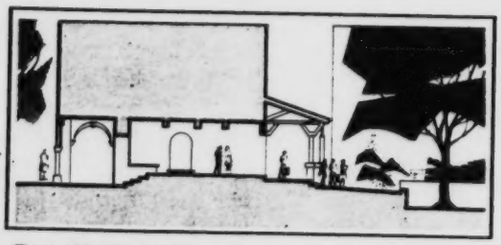
Comparative
World Examples



Courtyard

Toronto

University College



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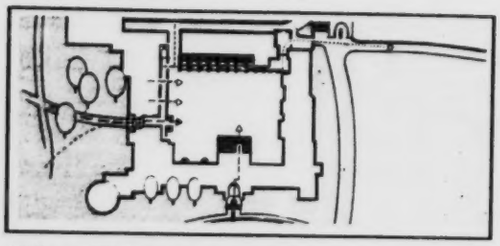

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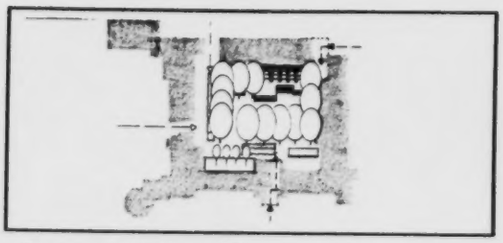
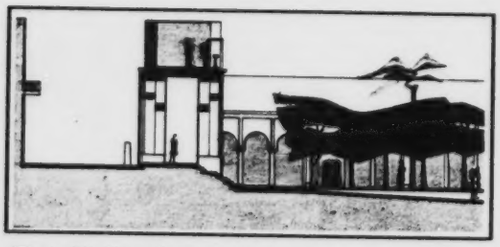


Internal Elements

Cordoba

The Mosque



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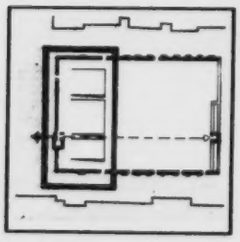
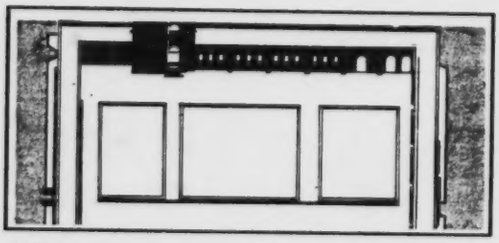
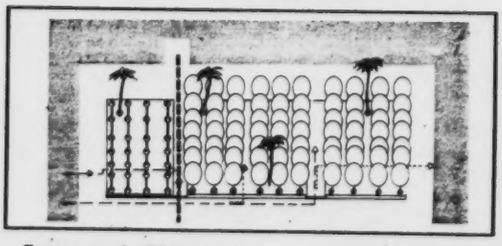


Key Plan

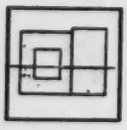


Edge Elements

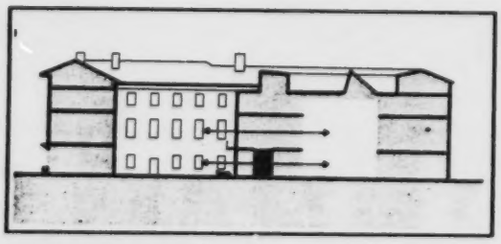


Internal Elements

Göteborg



Law Courts



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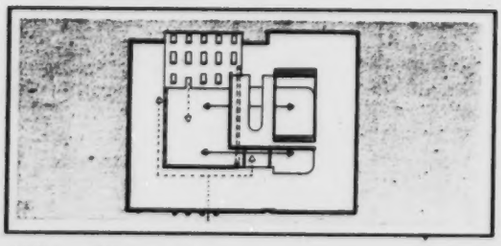

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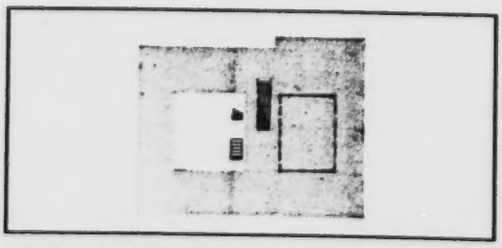
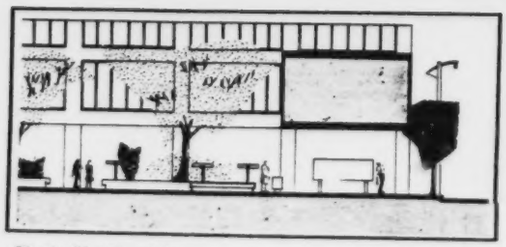
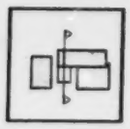


Internal Elements

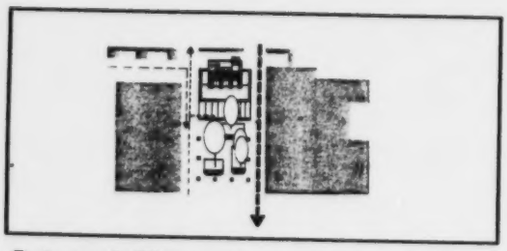
Toronto





Federal Building
36 Adelaide E.

Detail Section



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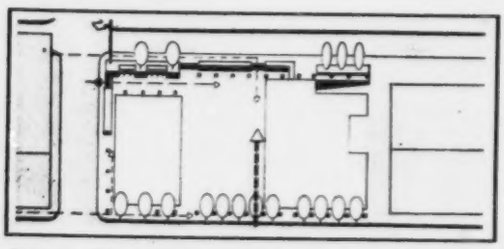
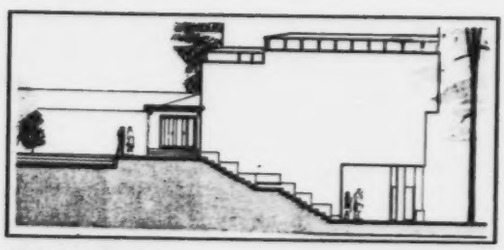
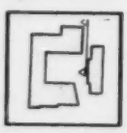


Edge Elements

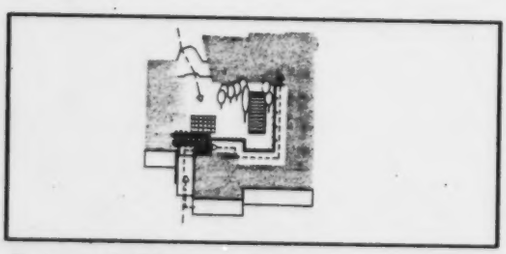
Säynätsalo





Town Hall

Detail Section



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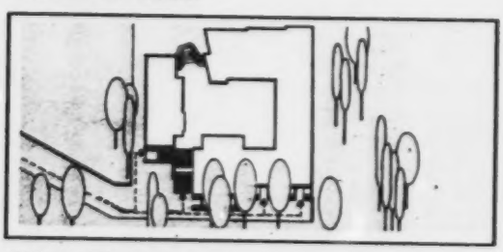
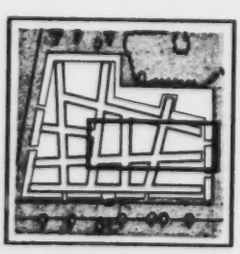
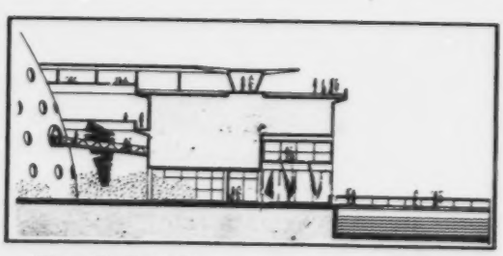


Edge Elements

The Hague

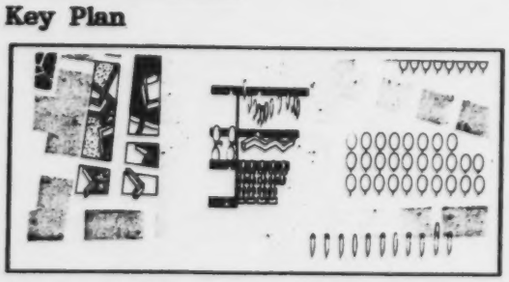


Key Plan



Detail Section

European
Patent Office



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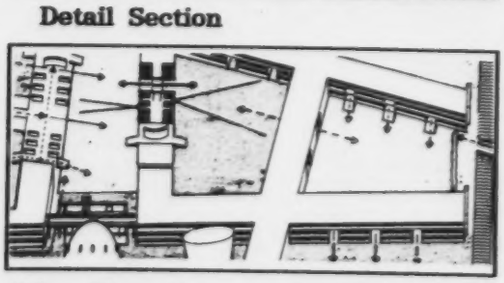
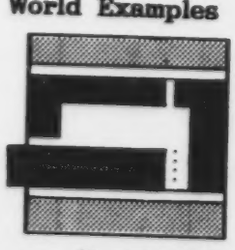


Edge Elements

Comparative
World Examples



Courtyard

Observations and Comparisons

The comparative examples illustrate a range of conditions at the exterior of the courtyard and surrounding spaces. **Aalto's town hall** uses a stair to connect the courtyard to the street. The courtyard is then set distinctly separate and becomes part of a sequence of movement through the courtyard to the other side.

The west entrance into the **University College courtyard** uses a sequence of steps and passages as a route through a portico into the sunken courtyard. **The Mosque at Cordoba,** much like University College, uses the alignment of tower, entry and sacred symbolic organization to communicate the presence of the courtyard to the exterior. The axis of alignment carries through the building and is transformed as a "light" wall behind which lies a garden.

In contrast to this more structured changes in level, both the **Patent Office** and the **William Lyon Mackenzie Building** exploit the possibilities of a horizontal and continuous system. The courtyards of the Patent Offices are faced with continuous windows, have direct accesses and a range of programmed used according to the area of the complex in which each courtyard is located.

The Mackenzie Building connects two parallel paths with a middle courtyard, with sitting areas and sculpture, to the two bounding streets. This conscious connection of the streets to the north and south promote a real public passage which makes the Mackenzie Building Courtyard much more public than its parallel project **The Lever House** in New York City, which treats the courtyard as an isolated and dead space.

The **Law Courts courtyard by Asplund** and the **Patent Offices complex** illustrate the possibilities of interlocking spaces. Although the Law Courts were an addition to the original, this coupling of an enclosed meeting court inside the new structure has complemented and extended the exterior courtyard. The wall enclosing wall also functions as the support for the external walkway and balcony.

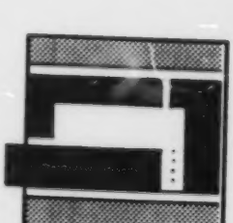
The addition built in the 1950's that formed the fourth wall of the University College Courtyard cut off a publicly accessible route through the space that would have connected the space into a secondary pedestrian system of movement through the campus.

The **Patent Offices** complex is able to provide a spectrum of variants of open, enclosed and partially enclosed courtyards. The enclosing of one courtyard among the many that are proposed still leaves potential of enclosing further courtyards or retaining them as open spaces. The possibility of several courtyards to fulfill different programme requirements of being open or enclosed allows a measure of accommodation for a cold climate within a balance of open and enclosed spaces.

Finally, the ways in which courtyards allow users to interpret and be sociable within the space depends on how the courtyard is designed as an autonomous piece. In the **Cordoba** example, the three islands allow passage between each one, forming a series of edges and places to sit, so that individual choices can be made to go or stay. When the space of the courtyard is occupied by large crowds, the three islands become fused into one large space, separated yet unifiable.

The single courtyards illustrated in the examples of the **William Lyon Mackenzie Building, the Law Courts Building by Asplund, and Allto's City Hall,** use the careful placement of elements of seating, planting, and sculptural works to produce autonomous spaces that people are comfortable to use as pleasurable outdoor rooms.

The design of the **Patent Offices courtyards** creates a diversity of choices with a thematic set of gardens and natural landscapes that are located in the series of closed internal courts and the open, less defined versions occurring at the street edges. The building's front face defines these spaces while also contributing to the context and scale of the street. The planning of the Patent Offices complex uses the series of courtyards to advantage, expressing each space as an autonomous piece, while still working as part of a totality, visually accessible and connected to the larger system.



Observations and Principles

1. Place Creation and Modification : Limits to Open Space

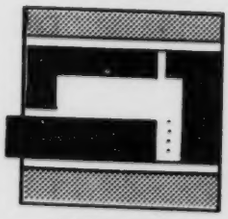
- The limits to the open space of the courtyard are established by built form that separates it from the public realm of the street.
- The courtyard is essentially an internalized outdoor space of a building that is open to the sky.
- The creation of the courtyard should maximize the best conditions of sunlight, and shelter from the wind at times of heaviest use.
- The courtyard should be connected by at least two clearly legible points of access that leading to a public street or to another public space through exterior passages, in addition to any internal accesses gained through the building.

2. Place Definition

- The nature of the courtyard space is to be held separate from the city by the device of a building thickness. This nature is best expressed when the courtyard is visible from the street, but presents a sharp contrast to the immediate public realm.
- The internal space of the building that is formed by the wall to the public street and the wall that limits the interior courtyard takes on a special role of intermediary.
- The enclosing building can add animation to the courtyard space by locating its entrances and internal circulation to use the courtyard as a through route.
- The animation of the courtyard is heightened by a good system of views to and from the enclosing building. The internal organization of the building and the organization of the courtyard can create layers of overlap involving access and use.

3. Place of Possibilities :
Space in relationship to objects, to each other and to a whole

- The internal structure of the courtyard should reinforce its separate nature as an open space. The design of the courtyard space should be site specific and promote an imageable and memorable public room.
- The composition and selection of elements and materials should reflect the sunlight and wind conditions of the space.
- In larger courtyards, a selection of elements that constitute the open space's composition should create a diversity of collective places within one space that also work as a whole.



Small Urban Places

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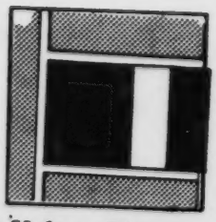
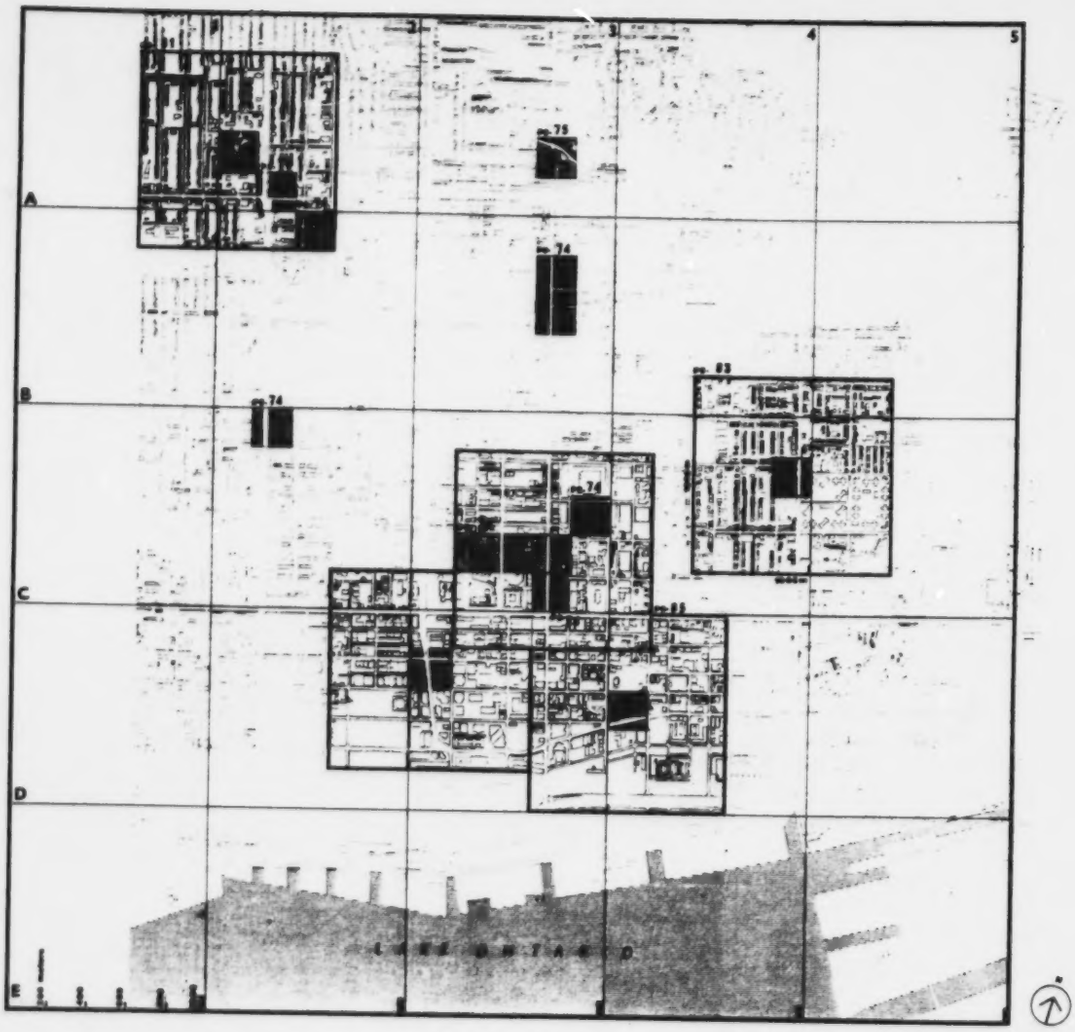




SMALL URBAN PLACES

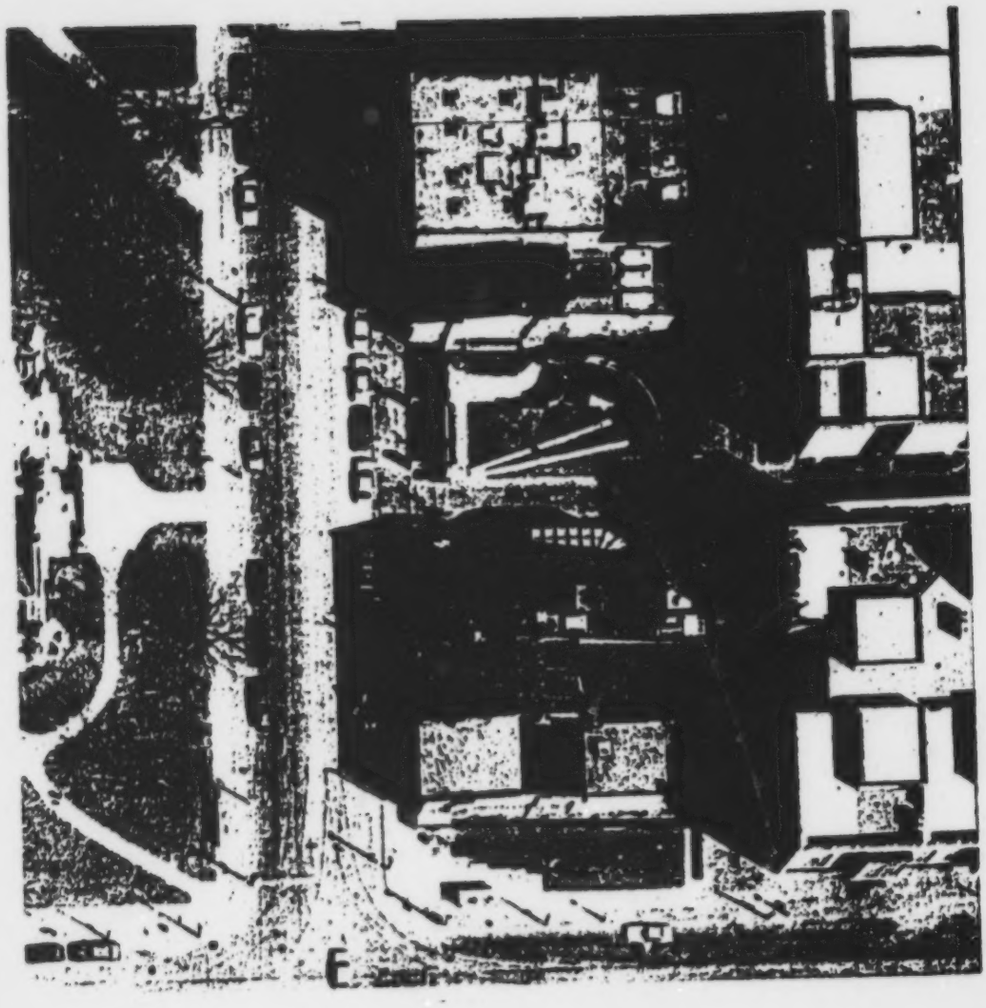
M A P P I N G

Lot Park

Definition	An open space that occupies an area that is less than a city block, and whose proportions are comparable to a normal building lot in the city.
Location	Within a normal city block with a minimum of one side open to a public street.
Size	Proportioned to a normal city lot; width to length ratio approximately 2:3.
Edge	At least one side is open to a street. At least one edge is made by a building. The street edge should be defined by a balance of planted and built elements that maintain openness. Buildings at edges should overlook the space and support the use of the park.
Landscape	Each lot park design should be site specific, resulting in a unique and imageable landscaped "room", using a balance of built and landscape elements.
Use	Eating lunch, playgrounds, ceremonies, performances, exhibitions, casual use.
Weather	Optimum orientation to receive sunlight at noon hour; provide shaded areas by canopies and planting.
System	The small lot park can be a connecting link between larger urban park spaces and can also form part of a secondary pedestrian movement route through the city.
Other	Open to the public during user hours. The design should not create dead end spaces or places to hide. Lighting, a phone booth, access to public washrooms and a public use at the ground floor of adjacent buildings ensure overlook and occupation of the site.

Intersection Park

Definition	An open space that is formed by an elaboration of a street intersection.
Location	Intersections where the city grid has shifted; elaborations of intersections, and intersections between streets and railways, subways, and expressway ramps.
Size	Irregularly shaped (elliptical, circular, triangular); area varies.
Edge	Streets at all edges
Landscape	The design should have a focus (sculpture, fountain, garden) and separate structure. Sheltered spaces an a balance of paved and planted materials should provide a centred space that provides spatial and visual relief from the congestion of the city.
Use	Casual use, sitting, bus stops, passing through.
Weather	Shelters for bus stops, shade from trees.
System	Can form part of a system of intersection parks to mark a special street or area of the city; can act as a link to larger open space types.
Other	Lighting required; no understory at planted edges.

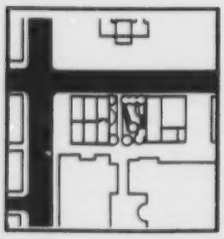


Definition

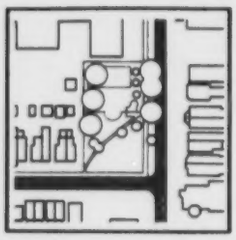
A small urban place normally occupies an area that is less than normal city block. Within the pocket park type there are two categories: **the lot park and the intersection park.**

The Lot Park occupies an area less than one block in the city. At least one, but not all of its edges are defined by streets. The lot parks are often located on **"unbuildable"** sites, such as over subway routes, or on natural features, like buried creek beds. The lot park often occupies former vacant lots that were once occupied by buildings, as in the case of the former **Colonial Tavern** site on Yonge Street, and the **King Street Sculpture Garden.** Their size represents a normal lot dimension in the city block structure.

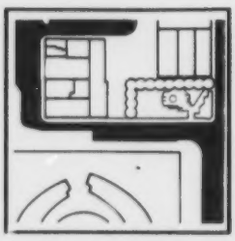
The Intersection Park is an open space that is formed by either an elaboration of a normal traffic intersection, as in the **Walmer Road pocket park,** or by the adjustments made to make up for the frequent **shifts,** or aberrations that occur within the Toronto street grid, such as **Anniversary Park** at the intersection of Gerrard and Parliament Streets. Intersection parks are also formed by the intersections of the street with different sorts of transportation routes, such as **train tracks, subway concourses,** and **expressway ramps.**



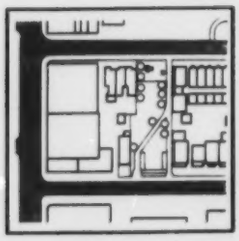
Sculpture Garden
King St.



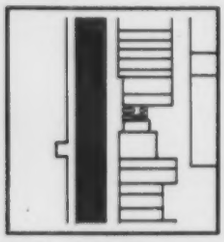
Huron St.



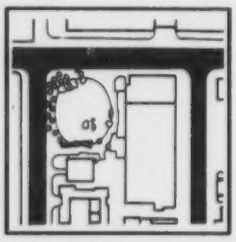
Sefton Park
Bay St.



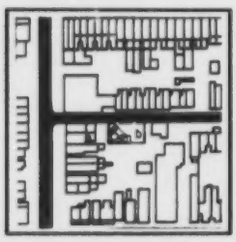
Dundonald St.



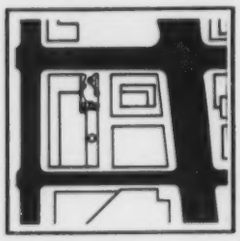
Colonial Tavern
Site



Ryerson
Skating Rink



Glasgow St.
at Cecil St.



Adelaide St. at
University Ave.

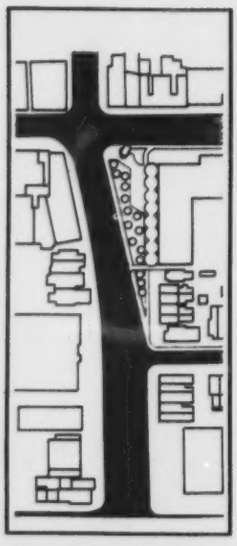
Adjacencies / Edges

The intersection park is most often surrounded by streets and is sometimes known as a **"traffic island"** at its smallest scale. However, the intersection park offers an opportunity to improve the quality of an intersection by designing specific landscaped or small sitting places that offer an amenity related to the facing buildings across the streets. The intersection park can be designed to give a special identity or image to a particular crossroads that will enhance and mark that intersection within the total city grid.

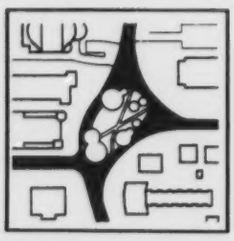
The Lot Park has a set of edges that are composed of at least one street and one building or lot boundary. Because of its limited size, its access at its street edge forms an important relationship with the public realm of the sidewalk that can determine the character of the whole park. The pocket park edge should extend the public realm of the street into the open space.

Its enclosed edges made by private yards or buildings should be distinctly marked. Because the pocket park is often used as pedestrian routes through blocks, planting with heavy understory on its edges make those routes especially risky and should be avoided. The edges should be distinct, urbane, and "open", but this should not exclude the range of possibilities such as raised levels, permeated walls, built canopies, or natural canopies formed by trees.

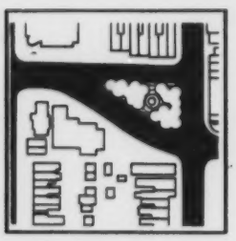
The pocket park type includes many conditions. It can be a route cutting through a block (**mid-block**), or across a corner (**corner type**). It may be a true **"pocket"** with only one street edge as both exit and entrance. The design of the open space should consider these conditions and make these characteristics clear: that there is a route, or that there isn't, that the park is a "thoroughfare" or that it is essentially closed at dark. The edge should form part of the integrated idea of the open space and allot the user the opportunity of **choice in direction** and **extent of movement.**



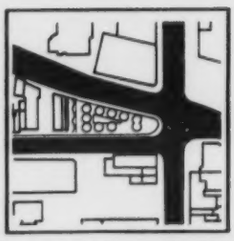
Spadina Road
& Bloor St.



Walmer Road



Anniversary Park
Gerrard Street



Stollery Park
Davenport & Yonge

Facilities and Use

Despite their small nature, the pocket park plays an important role in the downtown core. The pocket park can form links to other open spaces and provide welcome areas of openness in congested streetscapes. The scarcity of open space in the downtown core requires that these spaces work for many different people and a multiple of uses of different intensity and frequency.

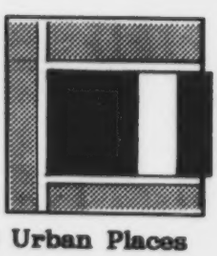
The uses of the pocket park can comprise a smaller version of the complexity of the uses found in the **City Park**. While their size prohibits the accommodation of major sports, the lot park offers valuable opportunities for **meeting, resting, display, exhibition, small gatherings, performances, works of art, ceremony, and play**. Designs for pocket parks can strike an integrated balance between a number of these uses in flexible structures that allow for many interpretations by the users.

Scale

The small scale of both the lot park and intersection park requires the planning of closely knit relationships of the elements of the open space in both an economic and imaginative manner. This small scale should also be understood as part of a larger system of open spaces and routes through the city.

Built Form

Built form in pocket parks can give the open space a distinct character and can serve many uses. Built facilities can include **public washrooms, concessions, roof canopies** for light and shelter, and supports for public activities such as **ceremonies, performances**, and **eating lunch**. These built facilities can provide marked zones for **phone booths, light sources**, and **maintenance equipment**.



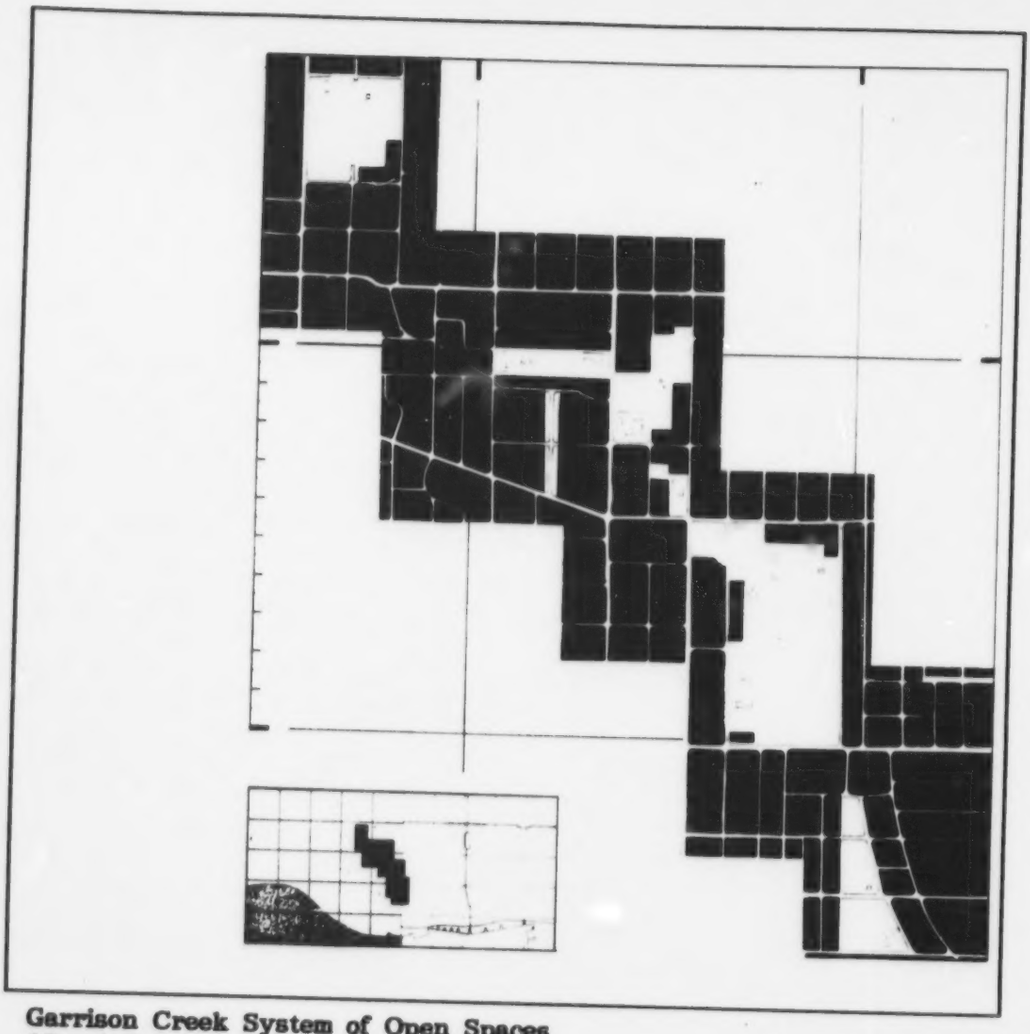
Spatial Structure: Surface, Form and Vegetation

Each pocket park site has its own particular situation of physical lay-outs, adjacencies, topographic features and landscapes that should be considered in site specific design.

The pocket park requires a specific physical lay-out. The grouping of its spaces, location of elements, entrance points and focus areas need an organizing idea and integrated composition. This structure can be achieved through a combination and balance of hard and soft surfaces, levels and degree of lighting, and a variety of built and landscaped responses to reflect an operating idea of how the open space works through movement, use, safety and relationship to the public realm.

As in all open spaces, the issue of safety is paramount. In the pocket park, its "everyday-ness" means a regular and casual constant day/night use, so that safety should be considered as a given component in an integrated design response.

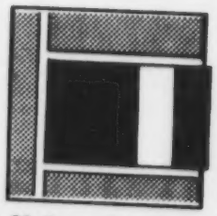
The safety of the users of the pocket park can be addressed in the design of clear movement systems, choices of movement, the avoidance of "blind spots", and lighting. The design of the pocket park must consider its use and physical aspects during the day and night. The subject of providing light is a given, but the quality of that light, and its potential as a design tool should be a necessary addition to the list of design requirements. In addition to the traditional "lamp post", light can be provided through art work, through built facilities, lit canopies, and by phonebooths.



Garrison Creek System of Open Spaces
(Creek buried)

System

The pocket park can be part of an intermittent system of smaller open spaces that connect larger types like the **ravine linear park** and the **city park.** This property of pocket parks to act as **"links"** should be integrated into its design to recognize its part within a larger system. The **intersection park** can also form a system by becoming part of a recognizable progression of similar pieces repeating through the street intersections of the city.

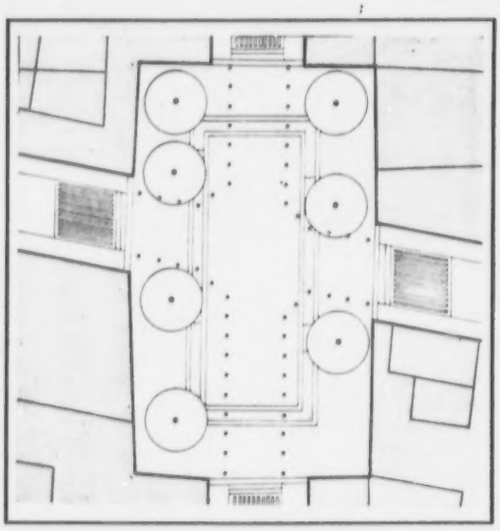


Placa S. Joaquin and Placa Mane

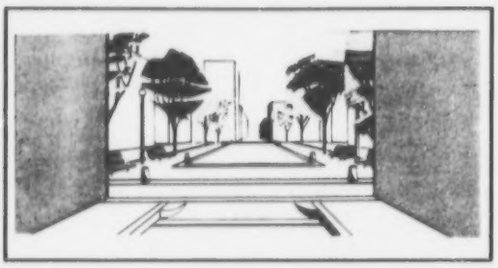
Located along the Calle Vallirana in Barcelona, this series of intersection squares occurs along a major route. They provide a break from the relentlessly dense urban fabric of Barcelona, creating nodes which act as landmarks as well as providing important public spaces.

The structure of these two squares is interesting in that it accomodates the practical needs of the automobile with the need for a workable public space. The vehicular routes through the square are retained by the bollards which delineate the border between automobile and pedestrian traffic. Simultaneously, the patterning of the square's surface unifies the space and takes it over for the use of pedestrians. Automobile traffic speed is reduced before entering the square by the slight upward slope of the roadways.

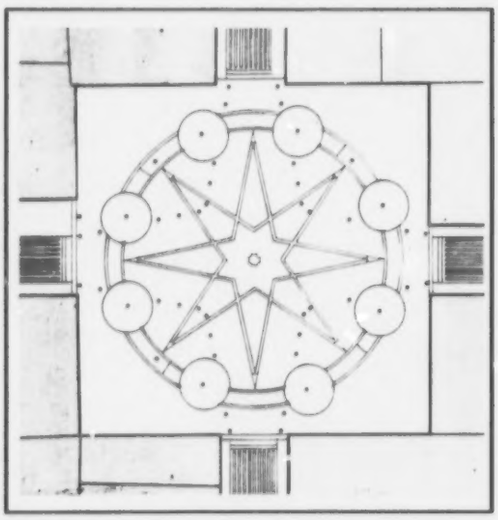
Key Plan



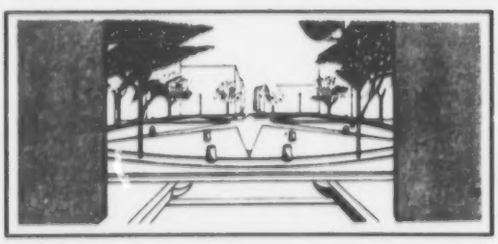
Plan



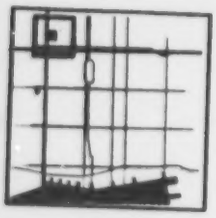
View

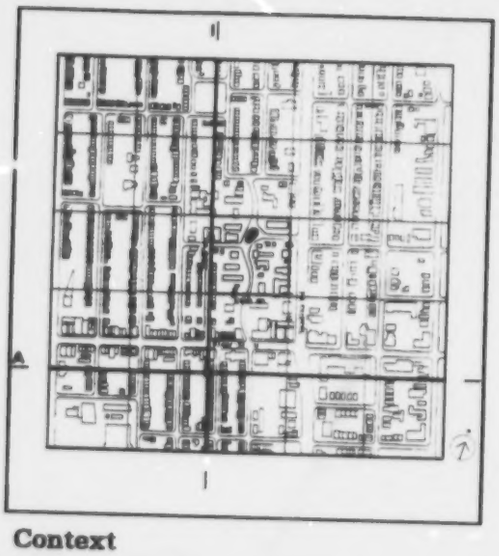


Plan



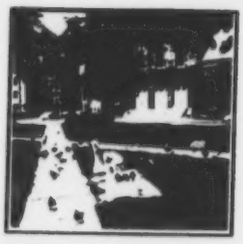
View





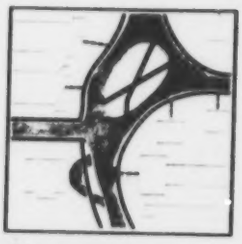
Context

Volumetric

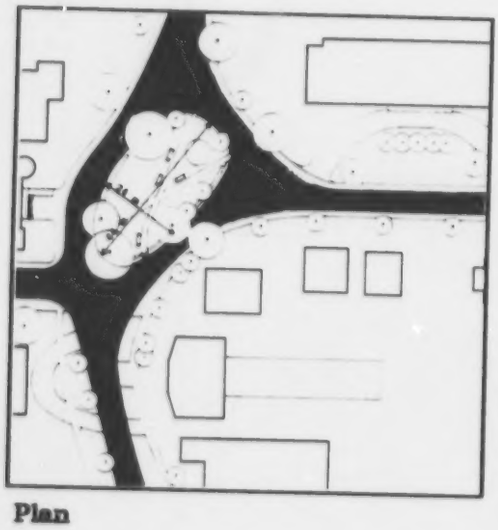


Use

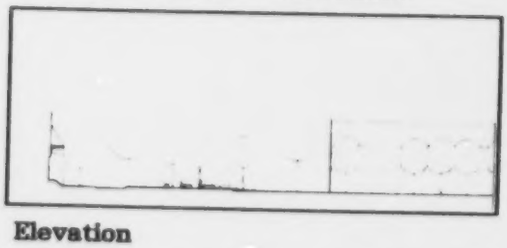
Public/Private



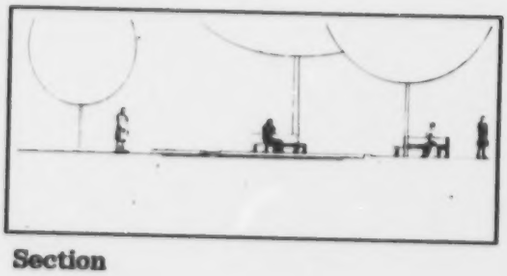
Movement



Plan



Elevation



Section

Walmer Road Park is a pocket park that is formed by the shift of Lowther Avenue to Barton Avenue at their intersection with Walmer Road. It is located within a quiet multi-storey residential area. It has an irregular elliptical shape with a overall length of 22 meters and width of 12 meters.

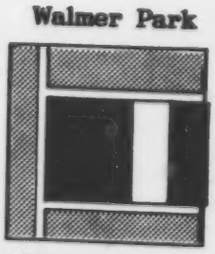
Paved road surfaces surround the park on all edges. The buildings, consisting of a church, 10 storey apartment towers, and traditional Toronto homes, all have generous forecourt open spaces. These "front yards" allow the space of the intersection park to perceptually extend its borders much further than its simple curb edge at the street. The actual space of the park is marked by two narrow crossing paths that serve as pedestrian "short cuts" across the intersection. The remaining surface of the open space is grass lawn with several trees. Several benches, facing outward, line the paths.

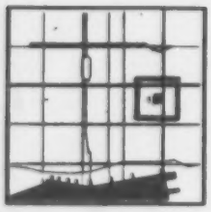
The lack of a centre or focus to this space relegates Walmer Road Park to a simple pedestrian short cut. This intersection park has a sufficient size and potential to contain a special attraction in its centre, like the fountain and pool at Anniversary Park, that will mark this open space as special.

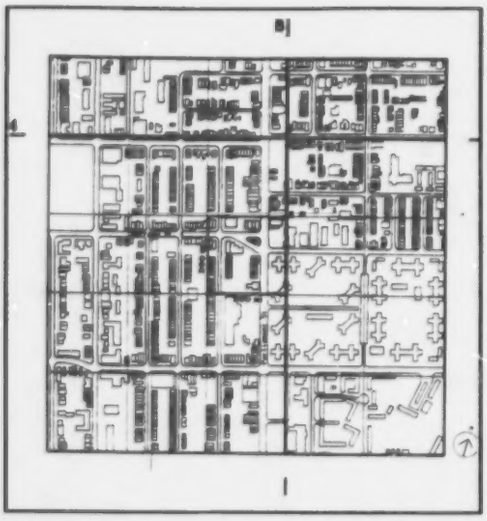
The traffic around Walmer Road Park must move slowly to safely navigate the curves of the elliptical park within. This car movement is additionally monitored by stop signs at all entry points to the intersection. This presents an ideal opportunity to change the paving material of the roads to possibly match or complement paving in the intersection park. This would serve to mark the intersection as a special place in the city network of streets. It also would extend the physical character of the intersection park that could bind the space of the park to the surrounding private and institutional forecourts.

Ownership:	Public
Frontage:	continuous frontage all sides
Area:	irregular ellipse shape, overall 24m x 44m 850sm
Form:	85% Soft Surface: lawn, trees 15% Hard Surface: asphalt path, curb, benches
Edges:	Street at all faces
Facing Edges:	North: axial street South: axial street East: residential West: church
Use:	Sitting, crossing through
System:	continues green space of generous forecourts of facing properties

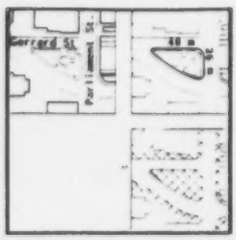
Walmer Park



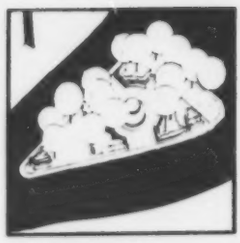




Context

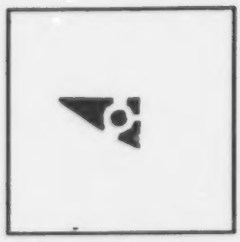


Site

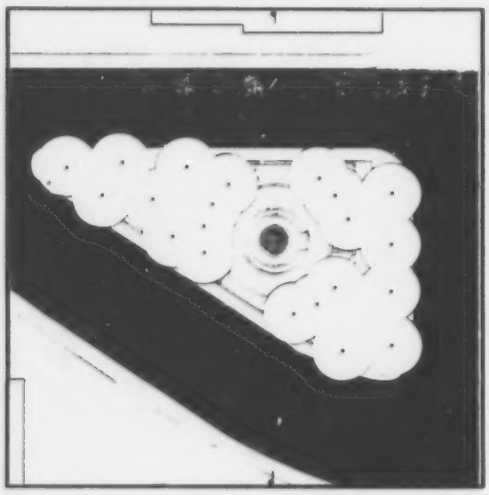


Volumetric

Movement

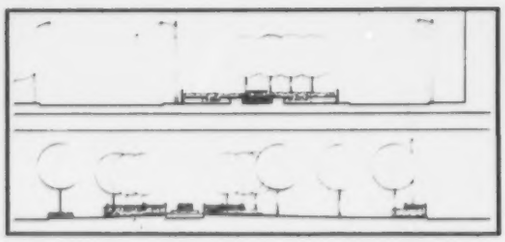


Public/Private



Plan

Use



Sections

Anniversary Park is a pocket park that is formed where the alignment of Gerrard Street shifts at its intersection with Parliament Street. This **intersection park** is a triangular space with its three sides measuring 49 meters, 30 meters and 55 meters. It is located at a junction between the Regents Park housing complex, small scale mixed use commercial and residential buildings, and a local library branch.

Anniversary Park is surrounded by traffic lanes. Its east side constitutes part of a pedestrian crossing. This park is representative of an intersection park that has deliberately set out to become an autonomous space.

It has an elaborate fountain and pool in its centre that is encircled by hard surfaces, and inward facing benches. The "points" of the triangular shaped space is landscaped with shrubs, grass, and trees. The midpoints are paved access points leading to the central fountain. Its outer edges facing the roads are paved sidewalks. The main movement occurs along its pedestrian crossing route and towards the centre of the space. There is relatively no movement around its perimeter despite the sidewalk that has been provided.

Cars are not allowed to use large areas of the road adjacent to but outside the curb of Anniversary Park. The area of the intersection park could be increased to include this prohibited zone. The road allowances on the north and south sides of the park could also be of a differently paved material corresponding to the park. This would serve to extend the borders of the park to visually include the streets and sidewalks, marking the intersection and its open space as a special place.

Ownership: Public

Frontage: continuous frontage all sides

Area: irregular triangle shape, overall 26m x 48m
624sm

Form:
70% Soft Surface: flower beds, lawn, trees
30% Hard Surface: concrete paving, water fountain, benches

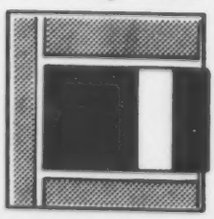
Edges: Street at all faces

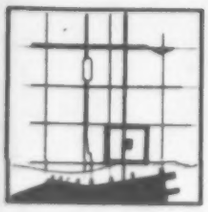
Facing Edges:
North: Commercial
South: Library
East: Commercial
West: Commercial

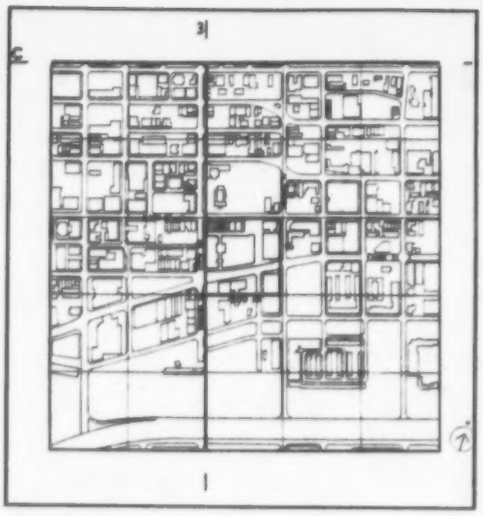
Use: Sitting, crossing through

System: none

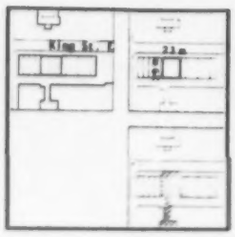
Anniversary Park







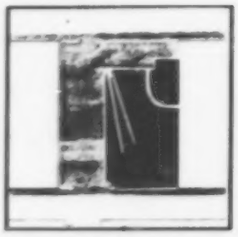
Context



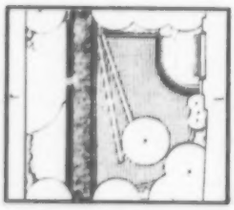
Site

Volumetric

Movement



Public/Private



Detail Plan

Sections

Use

The King Street Sculpture Garden is an example of a vacant lot that has been acquired for public open space. It is on axis with St. James Cathedral and is part of a well-used and elaborated pedestrian route originating at the cathedral on King Street, through the sculpture garden, and into a route through the "Market Square", a mixed used residential/commercial development. This axis ends at Front Street at a lively stretch of commercial activity close to the St. Lawrence Market. The Sculpture Garden's principal use as a route has been enhanced by its clear programme of changing exhibits of outdoor works of art, and restaurant with an outdoor cafe.

Its King Street face (north) has a single point of access, a double gate on axis with the cathedral across the street. The rest of the King Street edge is distinctly made with a masonry wall with planting and trees. Its south face is made in essentially the same forms and materials. Its east and west edges are former blank masonry walls that reflect the time when this site was fully built to both edges. The east wall now provides the backdrop for a fountain and works of art. The west wall in now the main face of the restaurant that opens directly onto the pocket park.

The route through the sculpture garden is clearly marked by paved areas with gates at both ends. Hard surfaces are also used for the fountain area and the restaurant's cafe. The remaining larger surface of the garden is a grass lawn where the works of art are placed. The grass gives the artwork a pastoral setting that complements the very urbane nature of the pocket park. The King Street Sculpture Garden represents a successful connection between public, institutional, and privately owned open space. It integrates an idea of strong axial movement, of axial views, and an outdoor gallery space to structure every consideration of edges, surface and use.

Ownership: Public

Frontage: 23m

Depth: 29m

Area: 667sm

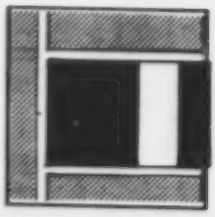
Form:
- 65% Soft Surface: trees, lawns, flower beds, planters
- 35% Hard Surface: concrete and special paving, water fountain, seating, gates

Edges:
- North: King Street and St. James Cathedral
- South: Residential and axial open passage
- East: Party wall of commercial building
- West: Commercial building, restaurant and cafe onto open space

Use: outdoor sculpture exhibitions, passage through block, cafe seating, sitting

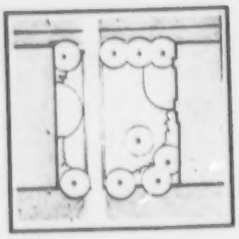
System: connects to open passage to the south and to St. James Square to the north

King Street
Sculpture Garden



Toronto

King Street Sculpture Garden



Plan

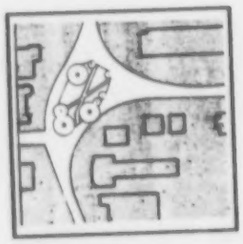
View

The King Street Sculpture Garden is part of a popular pedestrian passage which runs on axis from St. James Cathedral, through the Sculpture Garden, and then through the "Market Square" development to the south. This former vacant lot, located in the midst of a historically significant district, has been acquired for public open space, and is the site of temporary outdoor art installations.

The north and south edges of the garden are defined by a masonry wall with planting, and a formal double gate occurs on the north (King Street) face. The east wall of the garden provides a surface for the sculptural fountain, while the west face is formed by a restaurant with outdoor cafe seating.

Toronto

Walmer Park



Plan

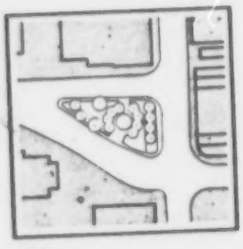
View

Walmer Road Park, located within a residential area, has an irregular elliptical shape. The special configuration of this space creates the potential for a focussed and cohesive open space which could contribute greatly to the neighbouring buildings, as well as the surrounding neighbourhood.

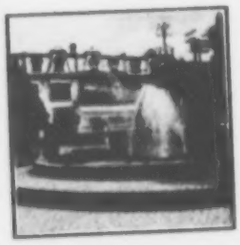
The park is surrounded by a variety of building types, including a church, a 10 storey apartment tower, and smaller private homes, all of which have generous setbacks. Presently, the actual park space contains two intersecting pedestrian paths, with the rest of its surface being grass and several trees. Basic seating is provided by benches which line the paths.

Toronto

Anniversary Park



Plan



View

Anniversary Park is an intersection park which is formed where Gerrard Street shifts at Parliament Street. This triangular space lies in the midst of small scale commercial and residential buildings, a local library branch, and the Regents Park housing complex.

The park space contains an elaborate fountain and hard surfaces with focussed seating areas. Its edges are formed by shrubs and trees, as well as a sidewalk which runs along its perimeter. The location of the park at a major intersection creates a steady flow of pedestrian traffic, which crosses through the centre of the space, as opposed to around it, making good use of the park.

The **Sixth Street Cenotaph**, located along the main street of the town of Chatham, connects the main street to the town's major urban park, Tecumseh Park, by a pedestrian bridge that crosses a small creek. Its overall dimensions are 13 meters by 40 meters. This small open space serves three scales of functions:

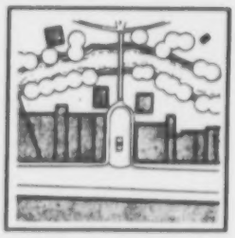
Ceremony: The cenotaph serves annually as a war memorial for remembrance services.

Movement: This park supports a well-used pedestrian system which provides an enjoyable shorter route connecting the main street to a city park, high school, museum, theatre, and neighbourhood beyond.

City Structure: At a larger scale, the cenotaph completes and marks the axis of a radiating street intersection beyond. The axis then continues to a view of the mature trees of the larger park beyond.

Chatham

View



Plan

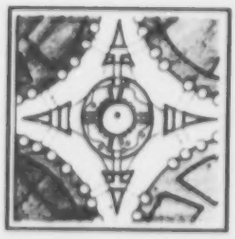
6th Street Cenotaph

The **Placa de Tetuan** is a remodelling of an earlier square. This space contained a series of sculpture and monuments which were obstructed by surrounding trees and shrubs. The remodelling was made in part by removing the trees and shrubs to strengthen the open space's position in the intersection. The solution to the traffic problem involved the construction of a low wall and balustrade around the space's perimeter. This was combined with a sloping raised ground plane which created an interior garden organized around a sinuous lawn and flower landscape.

The open space now functions as a landmark of that intersection. Trees and planting are reorganized to structure existing views and to create a series of routes and access points from the surrounding streets.

Barcelona

View



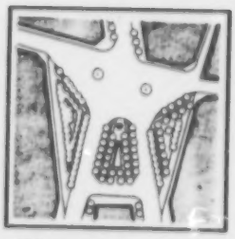
Plan

La Plaça de Tetuan

Place du Prince Eugenie, an irregularly shaped open space in Paris, is formed by the intersection of five streets. This traffic island has an overall dimension of 20 meters by 10 meters. It is flanked on either side by two other open spaces that have been planned in conjunction with the central place. The flanking spaces have overall dimensions of 45 meters by 10 meters. The combination of these three extends the overall space of the landscaped centre across to the faces of the buildings beyond. Strategic rows of trees are used in the flanking spaces to create an intermediate area and punctuation between the buildings and the road. Within these spaces are placed pieces of art, fountains, and seating, with landscaped lawns and surfaced walkways. The irregular shape of the central open space solves the difficult geometry posed by the five streets, and is molded by the planting of trees and the placement of paved material.

Paris

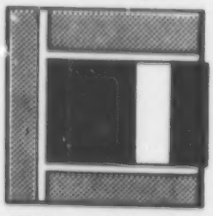
View



Plan

Place du Prince Eugène

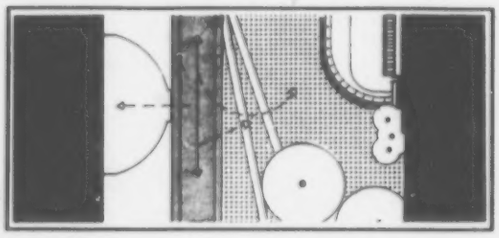
Comparative World Examples



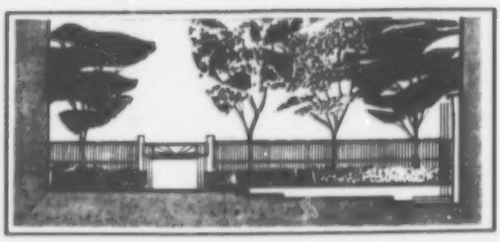
Small Urban Places

Toronto

King Street
Sculpture Garden



Detail Plan



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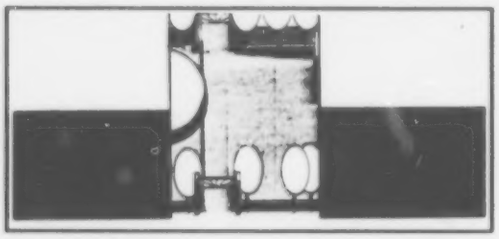
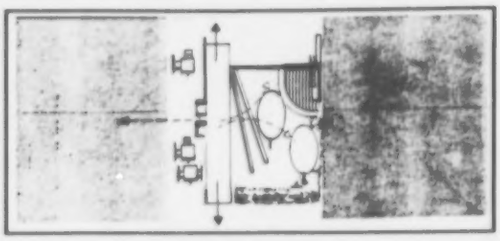


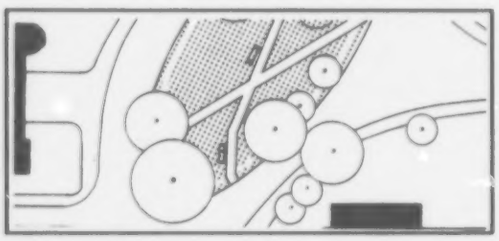
Edge Elements



Internal Elements

Toronto

Walmer Park



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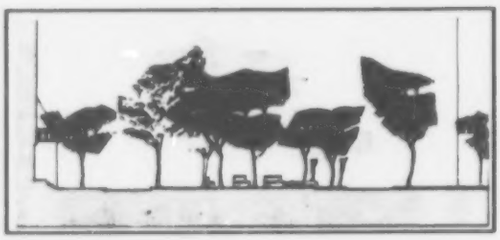

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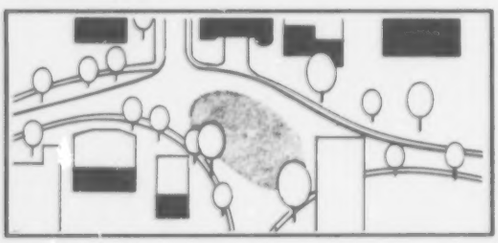
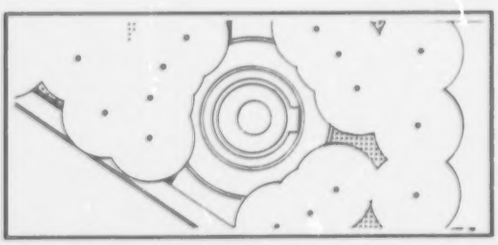


Edge Elements

Internal Elements

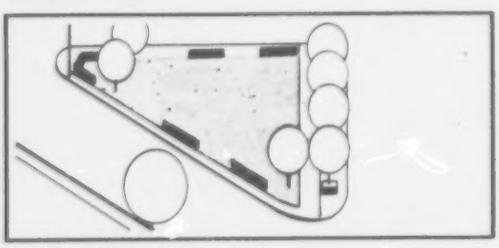
Toronto

Anniversary
Park



Detail Plan

Detail Section



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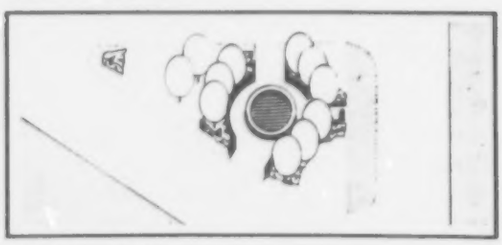
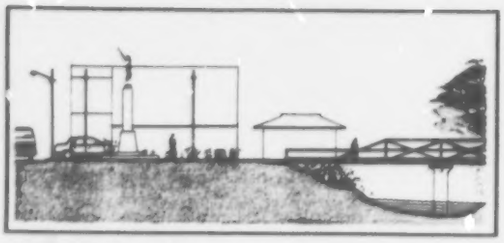


Internal Elements

Chatham



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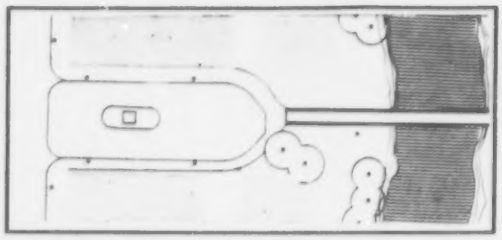
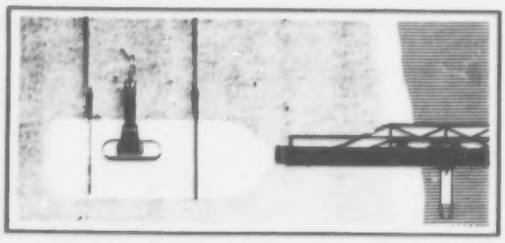


Detail Plan

6th Street
Cenotaph



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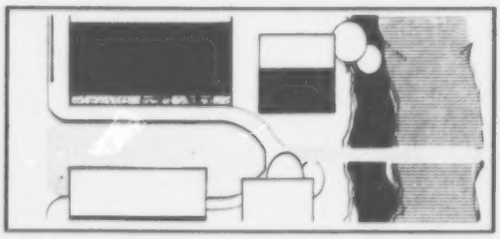
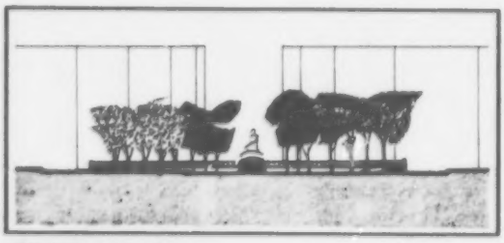


Edge Elements

Barcelona



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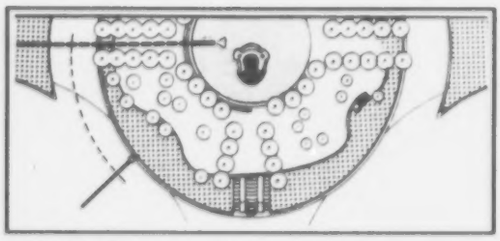
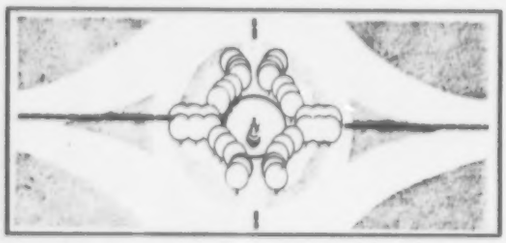


Detail Plan

La Plaça
de Tetuan



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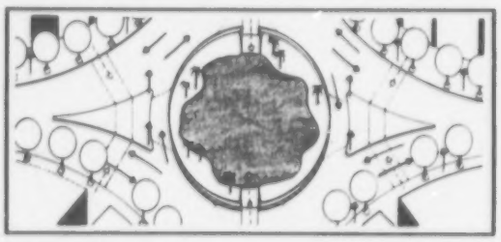
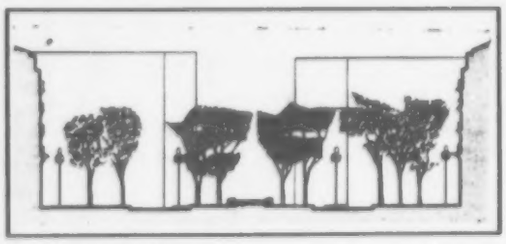


Edge Elements

Paris



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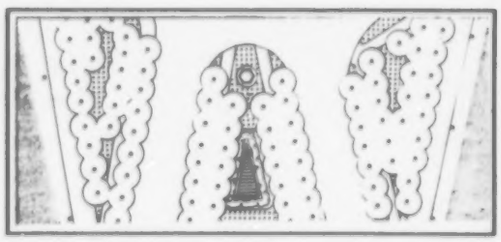
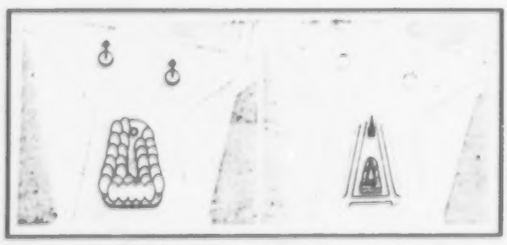


Detail Plan

Place du
Prince Eugène



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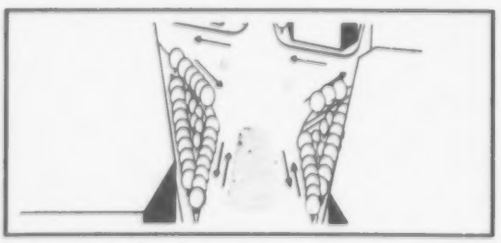
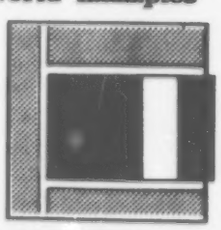


Edge Elements

Comparative
World Examples



Small Urban Places

Observations and Comparisons

The King Street Sculpture Garden represents a successful transformation of a vacant lot to an autonomous pocket park. It acts as a connecting piece in a strong axial movement and view between Front Street and St. James Cathedral.

Its primary use as a through route is clearly marked by a wide pavement and gates at both ends that are aligned with the doors of the cathedral. This strong axis is enhanced by the sculpture garden set in a pastoral lawn against the backdrop of an elaborate fountain on one side, and on the other a restaurant opening onto the garden.

Walmer Road Park and Anniversary Park are both formed at intersections where the street grid has shifted. Walmer Road Park is located in a mix of residential buildings with the generous front lawns (forecourts), and mature trees. This circumstance extends the visual sense of the Walmer Road park past its own boundaries to the facing buildings across the street.

The internal space of the Walmer Road intersection park is simply marked by two crossing paths that indicate a pedestrian shortcut through the intersection. Benches facing outward are placed along these paths.

Anniversary Park is located in an area of small commercial buildings where the boundaries of the triangular shaped space are sharply confined by traffic lanes. This intersection park contains a central fountain with encircling access points and planting. Benches in this park are arranged to look inward toward the central fountain.

In both parks there is an absence of a significant piece of public art or monument that could serve to mark the intersection from a distance. The opportunity also exists to design these parks so that they include the space of the surrounding streets in their "perceptual" volume, by perhaps resurfacing the street to match the park's paving, and the substitution of existing curbs with bollards.

Placa S. Joaquin and Placa Mane along the Calle Vallirana in Barcelona are a series of intersection squares that occur along a major route. Both systems of traffic and public space reinforce the other. The design of the public spaces visually extends their boundaries across the traffic lanes to the facing buildings by use of bollards and paving patterns that treat the entire intersection space as a whole. These intersections also mark the progress of the avenue by occuring as a series of highly prominent squares along its length.

Observations and Principles

1. Place Creation and Modification

- Small urban places are often the results of circumstantial conditions such as unbuildable sites ie. over subway stations, natural landforms, buried creeks, aberrations in the grid, and vacant lots that are acquired.

- The selection of these spaces for the creation of new public spaces should done on the basis of their appropriateness for

  a. **context: do they form links to other open spaces; do they fulfill a need for openness in a congested area;**
  b. **specific sites: do they have potential conditions that can lead to special public places;**
  c. **orientation: do they have sufficient sunlight**

- Intersection parks can be inserted as discontinuous systems of places into the widespread grid aberrations that occur in Toronto's street systems. Intersection parks can also be inserted to specially mark and restructure existing intersections into traffic circles, or used as marking special intersections in the laying out of new city neighbourhoods and precincts.

- Intersection parks are also transformed by eliminating the island and adding the open space directly to the public sidewalk, where it can be integrated into the streetscape.

2. Place Definition

- The specific nature of the small urban places and their spatial structure should be a legible entity that communicates clearly with its context. It should be clear whether the lot park connects through to other spaces, or whether it is a dead end.

3. Place of Possibilities : Space in relationship to objects, to each other and to a whole

- The designs of small urban places should work with the particular characteristics of the specific sites. The selection and composition of elements, and materials should promote a strong imageable space.

Squares and Plazas

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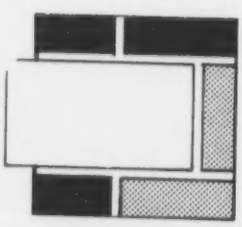
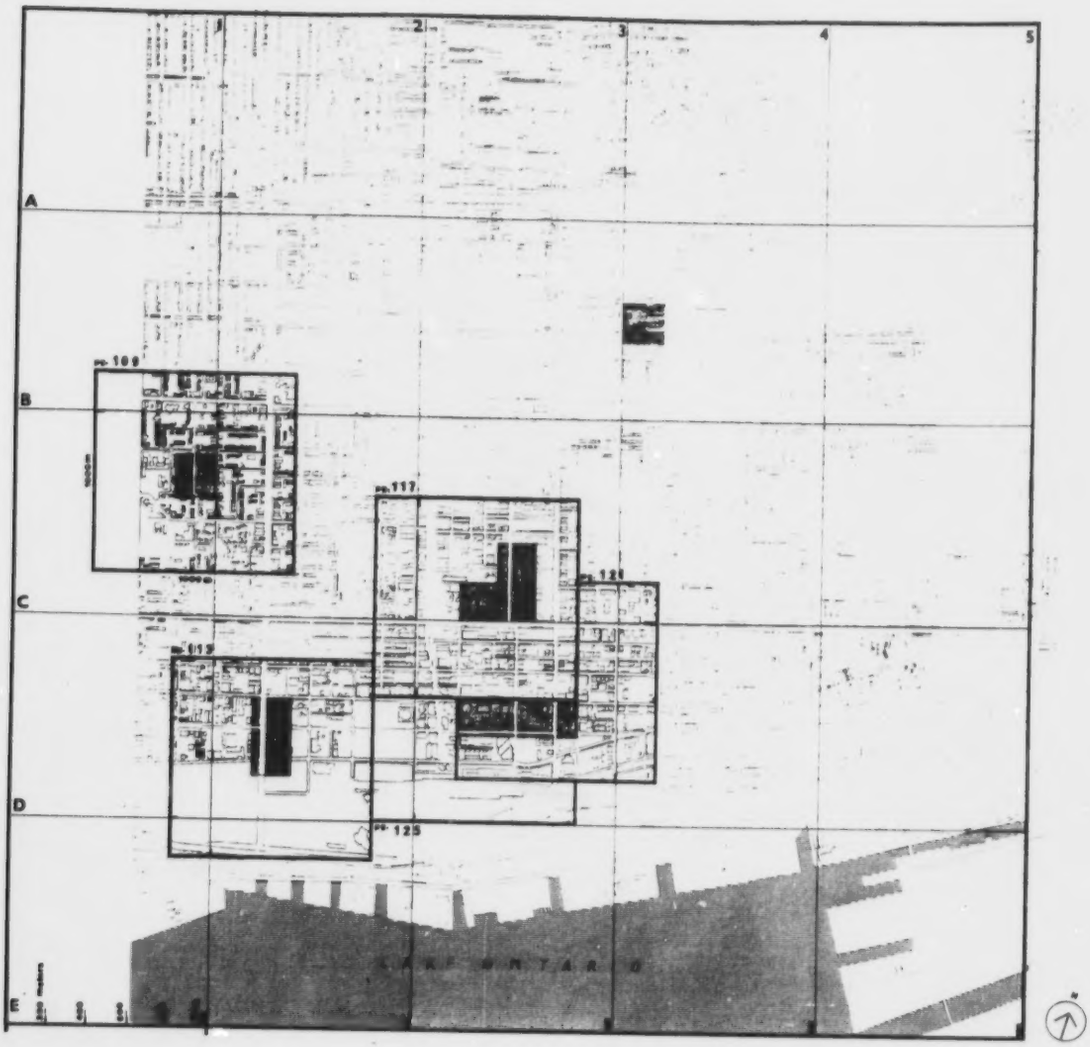
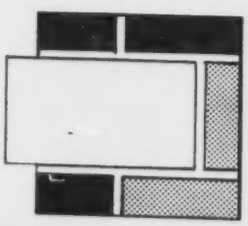




SQUARES AND PLAZAS

M A P P I N G



Squares

Definition	A large public open space that occupies a large proportion or the entire area of a city block. It is surrounded on at least three of its four sides by public streets.
Location	The square forms a focus for its surrounding context beyond its immediate built edges. It is either suurounded on all sides by public streets or shares its block with a major institutional building.
Size	The size of the square depends upon the size of the block it occupies in the grid pattern. Squares located in the downtown core are larger than neighbourhood squares that occupy the smaller blocks found in residential street patterns.
Edge	At least three edges are made by streets with perhaps one face to a major institutional building. Edges to the street should be defined but allow free movement through. Buildings across from the streets should present a consistent built edge that defines the open space as an enclosed outdoor room.
Landscape	Perimeter zones of trees define an internal space of the square separate from the public street. The square can provide for large gatherings with hard surfaces complemented with planting. A less intensely used location can provide for gatherings with a "common" green lawn and complementary gardens. Public facilities and supports to be included like water elements, sculpture, washrooms, concessions, bandstands, etc.
Use	Casual use, passing through, secondary pedestrian routes, eating lunch, entrances to surrounding institutions; special uses like public demonstrations, celebrations, ceremonies, performances and exhibitions.
Weather	The built edge should be controlled to ensure good sunlight from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, and to avoid heavy wind conditions.
System	The square forms a centre of a network of open spaces. Connections should be made with the square by smaller types of open spaces like forecourts, courtyards and passages, pocket parks, and by the geometry of paths and through routes.
Other	Open day and night; provide high levels of lighting, on-grade public uses that are occupied at night; keep edges open and accessible.

Plazas

Definition A rectangular open space that occupies a large proportion of or the entire area of a city block. At least two buildings are located within the limits of the site that create a series of connected smaller open spaces.

Location The plaza is located on city blocks in the commercial core, with a minimum of one edge facing a public street.

Size The overall size of the plaza ensemble is rectangular and occupies a major proportion of a large city block.

Edge At least one edge is made by a public street. Other edges are made by buildings. The street edge should be open but defined by tree planting or change in material. Buildings should support the space by providing on-grade public uses and facilities. Buildings should be located to maximize sun penetration and minimize wind velocities.

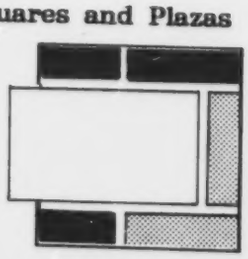
Landscape Smaller scale elements should be used to create a human scale and to suggest separate smaller spaces within the collective spaces of the plaza. Tree planting should be provided to aid in creating a microclimate and amelioration of wind effects. Public facilities like washrooms, concessions, pavilions should be provided in separate structures or in public and clearly accessible areas of the adjacent buildings.

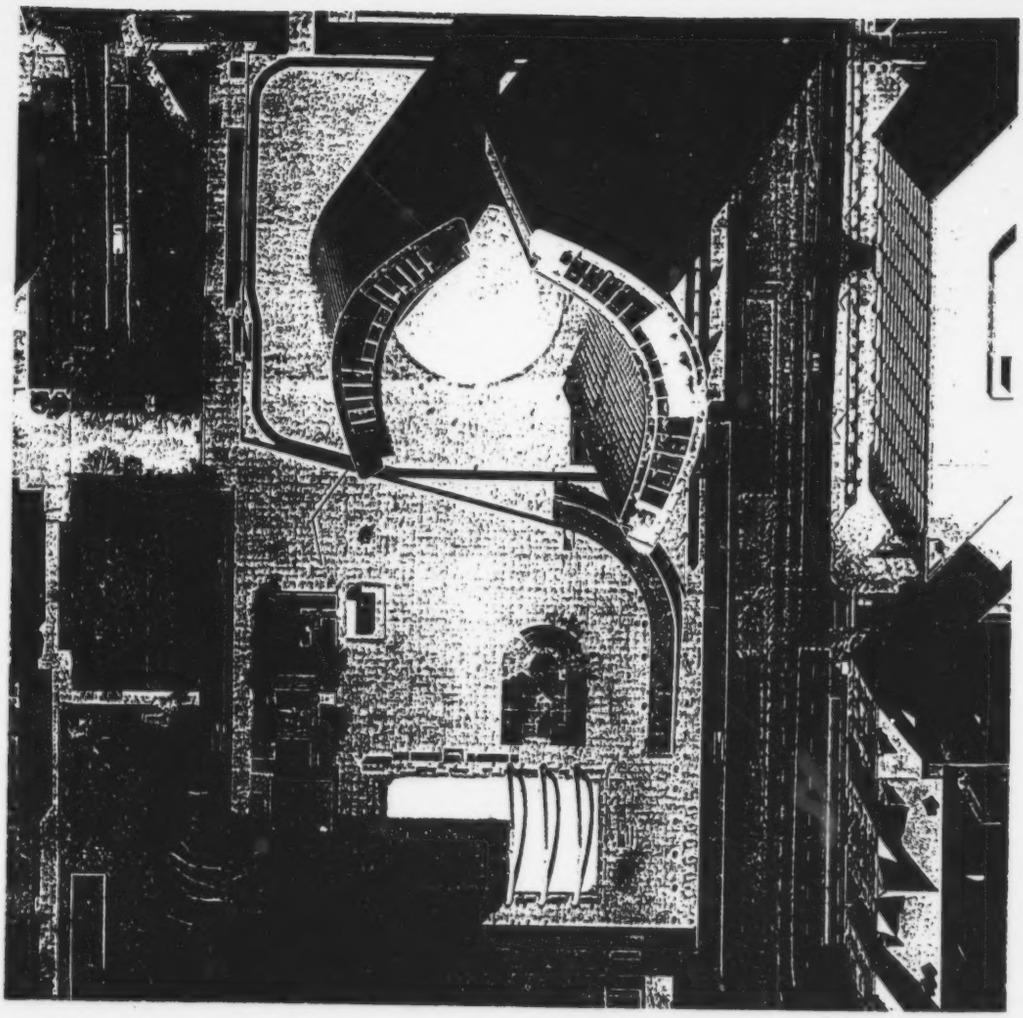
Use Casual use, passing through, secondary pedestrian routes, eating lunch, entrances to surrounding buildings, small performances and exhibits.

Weather The buildings should be sited to ensure good sunlight from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, and to avoid heavy wind conditions.

System The plaza can connect into other secondary routes across city blocks, and work within a system of consistent setbacks.

Other Open day and night; provide high levels of lighting, on-grade public uses that are occupied at night; keep edges open and accessible.





Definition

Both the square and the plaza are large open spaces, but are defined separately because of the way the open space is defined by buildings, streets, ownership, and use.

The Square is the most public of all open spaces. It occupies and area of a city block and is faced by public streets on at least three of its four sides. One side may be made by a public institution that occupies a portion of the block, while still leaving area for a well proportioned, rectangular or square shaped public space. The square plays an important symbolic role in presenting a physical image of the public life of the city. Nathan Philips Square, for example, forms as much a part of the image of city hall as the physical building does itself.

The Plaza can occupy a large proportion of a city block. It is faced on at least one side by the public street. Several buildings are located **within** the large rectangular area of the plaza, rather than forming a continuous edge to the space. This placement of buildings forms a series of connected spaces which are collectively termed the "plaza". This is one major difference between the square and the plaza.

The second major difference is one of ownership and use. The square is the quintessential public space of the city. It is the forum for public expressions of dissent, of celebration and of ceremony. The building that may form one edge of the square is completely public in use and in character. The plaza, on the other hand, is privately owned and the buildings that form its spaces are commercial office towers, usually with banking halls located at grade with accesses to underground networks of shopping facilities. While the large open space of the plaza may appear to be public, the public use of the plaza is limited to casual use like sitting, eating lunch, or access to the buildings within the plaza boundaries.

The essential democratic nature of the square does not exist in the plaza. This curtails the plaza's use to one of a constructed image of publicness in the interest of the owners of the open space. The line of ownership between the public sidewalk and the plaza, while often made invisible by the use of like materials, is nevertheless quite distinct.

Large and Small Squares

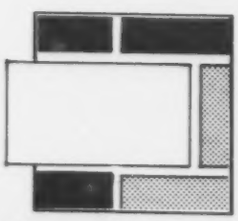
Squares are subdivided into two categories determined by their size and location: **small neighbourhood squares** and **large city squares.**

Small Neighbourhood Squares

This type of square is smaller in area than its city square counterpart. It is generally one small block surrounded by streets and set in a residential neighbourhood. Across the facing streets, the built form consists of houses, small shops or institutions like schools and churches.

Large City Squares

The larger city square occupies the area of a major city block in an important location in the downtown core. It often faces a major public institution like a city hall, or cathedral, and forms a focus at a larger scale for a city district of several surrounding blocks.



Adjacencies / Edges

a. Squares

Both types of squares are surrounded by streets on at least three sides. Residential squares are more likely to have four street edges, while the city square is often faced by a major public building on its fourth edge. Buildings facing onto the square can contribute to the quality of the open space by presenting a collective face that helps to enclose a consistent volume of the open space. THe siting of the buildings can be planned to provide a collective forecourt space that extends the open boundaries of the city square, allowing for "overflow" of people when large city events occur, like parades, rallies and performances. The forecourt spaces also provide links that join the square to a larger urban network of open space.

The volume of the smaller neighbourhood square is distinctly made by a consistent enclosure of houses and small shops and institutions facing onto the streets surrounding the open space. The quality of the small square can also be heightened by a consistent outer edge of the front yards or forecourts of the houses and institutions.

In both cases, the edge of the square to the street should be entirely accessible and open, with repeating public elements that define the edge without limiting the access. The second outer edge of facing buildings should be consistent in quality and in a proportion that will allow for good sunlight and control of winds within the space of the square. The surrounding buildings should have uses at grade that complement the public nature of the square. The upper floors of the surrounding built edges, in both types of squares, can provide overlook conditions that make the open spaces less isolated at night.

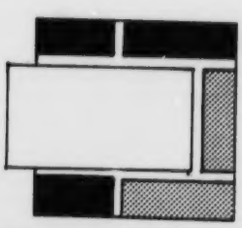
b. Plazas

Because the plaza is a collection of connected open spaces formed by streets and by buildings that are located within a rectangular area, many edge conditions exist, and the quality of the open space of the plaza is dependent upon how well those edges are made.

The edge of the open space at the street face should be marked by simple means like changes in material or landscape elements. The minimal changes in grade that may occur across the length of a city block should be made by equally accessible systems of ramps and low, wide steps to a maximum number of four risers. The public space of the street can be reinforced by additional tree planting to complement trees provided by the city.

Buildings that form edges to the plaza space should have continuous public uses at grade to animate and support the open space during both day and evening hours. The proportion of the spaces made by buildings should allow for good sunlight exposure from mid-morning to mid-afternoon and ameliorate wind conditions by smaller scale strucures at grade such as trees, canopies and low roofs.

The delineation of edges is important to define the multiple open spaces formed by the placement of buildings to suggest autonomous single spaces as part of a connected whole. For example, within the overall open space of the place of Commerce Court, several separate spaces are formed that are similar to other open space types like the courtyard and the forecourt. These are linked by wide passages. Edges to these smaller spaces aid in creating a system of well connected separate open spaces that are understood at both the larger collective scale of the plaza and as separate pleasant and imageable smaller spaces. These edges can be made by low scale built and landscape elements like planting areas, and low walls.



Spatial Structure: Surface, Form and Vegetation

a. Squares

Large open level areas should be provided within the internal space of the square. Where the square is complemented by highly public institutions, like the city hall, these areas should be hard surfaced with complementary landscape elements to form edges and secondary focal points. Other squares that share the block with less intensely public uses can have a predominantly planted surface, where the large open area could be designed as a green lawn in the tradition of the "common" of early North American settlements.

The internal order of both the city and residential squares can contain built public structures like bandshells, pavilions, speaking platforms, public washrooms and concessions that are of high quality design and materials.

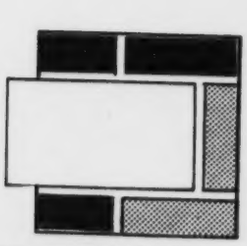
The neighbourhoods square contains some limited recreational uses like playgrounds and wading pools as focal points within the overall public space of the square. Planted areas should not obscure the square from its facing streets. Berms, hedges and heavy understory planting at the square's periphery are unnecessary design techniques that isolate the square from the street, making it unsafe during evening use.

b. Plazas

A plaza can be interpreted as a system of smaller open spaces by the use of centreing elements like water features, planting or works of art. Built structures like sheltering canopies, pavilions and public washroom facilities can heighten and intensify the public use of the plaza and be placed either as part of the resident buildings or as separate structuring elements within the space.

The plaza is predominately hard-surfaced with areas of gardens and planting. Trees should be provided to define edges of smaller separate open areas, and to define the street edge. The planting should also be designed to improve the microclimate of the plaza to ameliorate wind conditions and to give areas of shade.

The built elements of the plaza, like low walls, surfacing, washroom facilities, concessions, pavilions and seating, should all be of high quality design and materials.



Facilities and Use

a. Squares

The role of the **city square** is that of an **intensifier** of the public life of the city, as opposed to the conception of the park as essentially a **relief** from the urban fabric. More than the other types of open space, the public square must function in both its "empty" and "filled" state. In an everyday condition, the square provides the setting for casual uses like eating lunch, secondary routes across a city block, strolling, tourists and specific limited recreational facilities, like a skating rink. These uses should be accompanied by the corresponding support facilites like concession buildings, public washrooms and pavilions.

The special occasions of the square, when it is filled to capacity with large gatherings of people for rallies, celebrations or ceremonies, should be supported by the provision of large areas of level hard-surfaced spaces with associated areas to allow for overflow.

The **residential square** should accomplish the same objectives for use and facilities as the city square but considered at a smaller scale. The surface of the neighbourhood square should be mostly level with areas of hard paving and planted gardens, and provide the setting for smaller gatherings like small demonstrations, neighbourhood festivals, picnics, art exhibitions and outdoor performances. The space should also work well for the everyday use of children's play, eating lunch, passing through, and the gathering of small groups. These uses should be also supported by built public facilities like washrooms, bandshells, works of art, fountains and pavilions that will heighten and promote public use.

Both types of squares are continuously open day and night. These spaces should be provided with safety features that are incorporated into an integrated design. These features include high levels of lighting, clear movement paths through the park, (no dead ends), phone booths, open edges to the street, no heavy understory planting or berms that would create blind areas and populated built form at the edges that would encourage overlook conditions and public uses at grade.

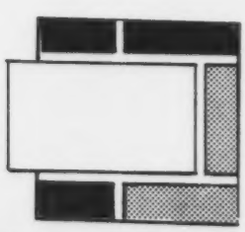
b. Plazas

The open space of the plaza provides a setting for casual uses that become part of a daily routine for many people that work and visit the office towers located within the block. Parts of the space become appropriated as passages across the block. Other areas directly address entrances to buildings on the plaza and to underground shopping networks, while spaces with no direct street edge become a loosely defined "court". The plaza then serves three main functions:

1. Secondary pedestrian passages through blocks;
2. Entrances to buildings and underground networks;
3. Casual seating areas in internalized courts that serve as places to eat lunch, and small scale events like performances, and exhibitions.

The use of these spaces is directly dependent on how much sun reaches the spaces between mid-morning and mid-afternoon, and if the wind can be minimalized to create a pleasant microclimate that encourages people to stay. These uses also require the support of sheltered areas from the wind and rain, tree planting to provide summer shade and climate moderation, and on grade public uses that support the activity of the spaces. Washroom facilities should be provided that are clearly public and directly accessible from the open spaces of the plaza.

The plaza generally remains open day and night and so requires well considered safety features integrated into the design of the open spaces. Spaces without direct street frontage should have several generous and clear passages that connect to busy public streets and not to deserted lanes or dead ends. Overlook conditions should be encouraged by public evening uses incorporated into the on grade activites of the building. All areas need to be well lit with clear access to phone booths.



Scale

a. Squares

City squares and the smaller neighbourhood squares usually occupy normal city blocks or at least a major portion of them. Their comparative size reflects the difference in street pattern between the commercial core and the surrounding residential neighbourhoods. Both types are proportionally large to their surrounding buildings and become a focus for their respective areas.

b. Plazas

The area of the plaza occupies at least a major portion of a large commercial block of the downtown core. The collection of spaces are made by the street and often by large and high office towers, which can give the plaza a "giant" scale.

Although this "giant" scale can produce very dramatic spaces, it should be tempered by smaller scaled elements that can allow a comfortable environment for the user. Within the large scale of the block, smaller spaces can be defined that co-exist as part of the collective whole.

System

a. Squares

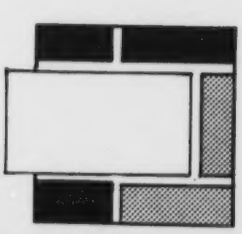
Because of its size and intense use, the city square can become a focus for many surrounding blocks and generate smaller types of open space passages that link it to other open spaces. For example, the position of the south lawn of Nathan Philips Square follows a system of forecourts set by the Osgoode Law School to the west and Old City Hall to the east, while its north edges form connections to the Law Courts building to the west and to Trinity Square to the east. In this case, Nathan Philips Square is as much a centre for surrounding open spaces as it is for the built form.

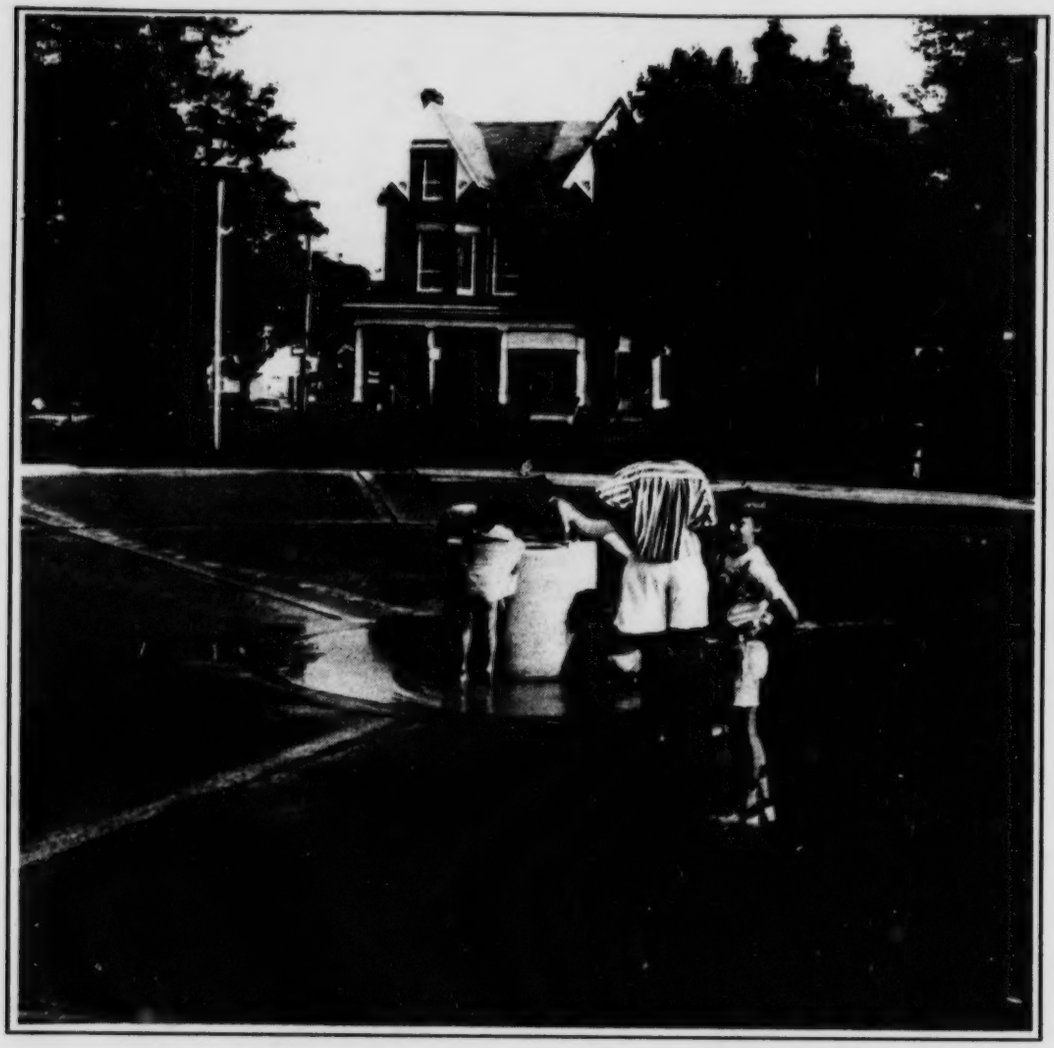
Existing squares set an image for a district and promote intense public use around its edges. This proposition can be employed in the design of a new square, either set into an existing urban fabric or as a centre of an entirely new neighbourhood or commercial development.

At either scale the creation of new city squares and neighbourhood squares can be instrumental in setting a positive image for new developments while contributing and adding to the overall open space system.

b. Plazas

Because the open space of the plaza can be designed as several smaller connected spaces, the opportunity exists for the plaza to connect into other open space networks of consistent street setbacks and planting, and pedestrian routes moving through blocks that ultimately connect to other internalized courts or terminate in major open spaces like the city square or urban park.





Ownership: Public

Frontage: 54m

Depth: 105m

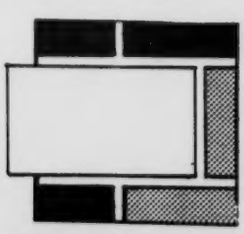
Area: 5670sm

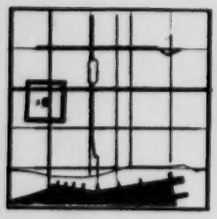
Form:
80% Soft Surface: grass, trees, planters
20% Hard Surface: paved walkways

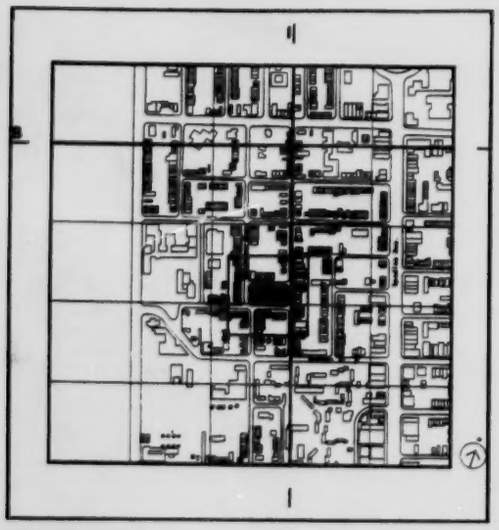
Edge:
North: Denison Square
South: Wales Avenue
East: Augusta Avenue
West: Bellevue Avenue

Use:
casual (eating lunch, sitting)
passage through block
wading pool, children's playground
community gatherings

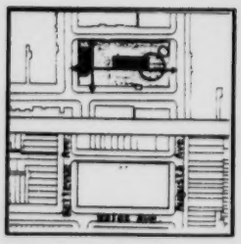
Bellevue Square



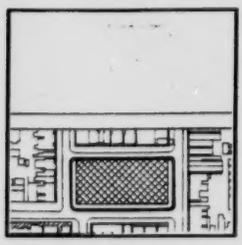




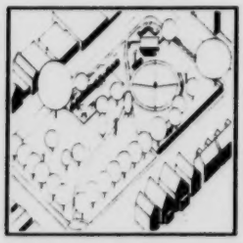
Context



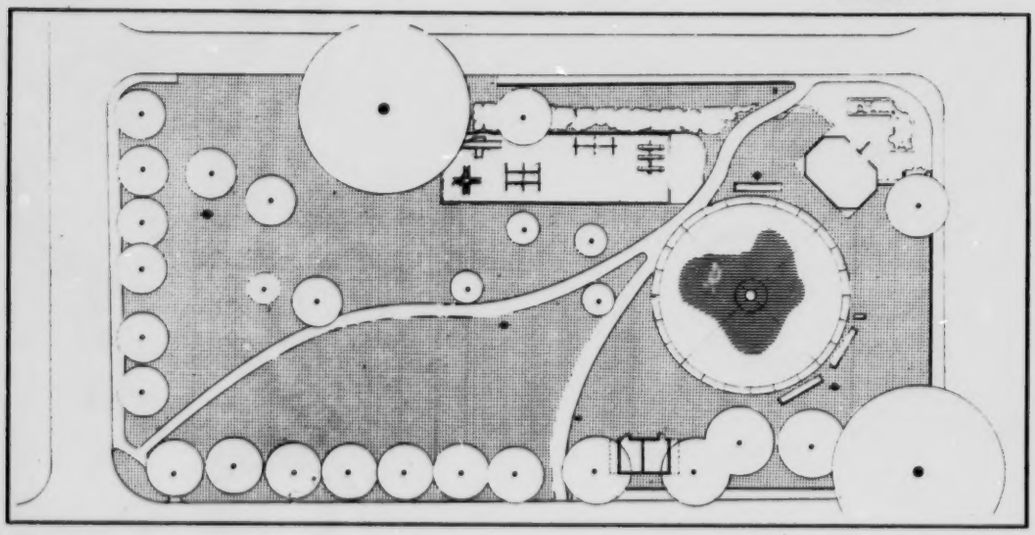
Site and Size



Public/Private



Volumetric



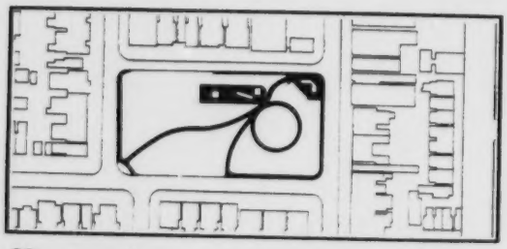
Plan

Bellevue Square is a residential square set in the neighbourhood of Kensington Market. It is a rectangularly shaped open space that is surrounded on all sides by streets. Its major street face occurs at its east edge, at Augusta Avenue in the southern end of Kensington Market. Augusta Avenue is occupied by a continuous built edge of small houses that have been tranformed to food markets, poultry and meat stores, restaurants and garment outlets that make up a highly congested and popular market area.

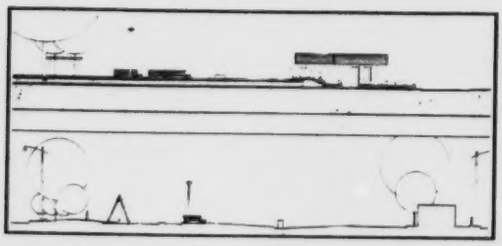
The west facing street is Bellevue Square which presents a consistent face of small houses on narrow lots. This pattern and use is also found on the north and south facing streets (Denison Square and Wales Avenue). A small synagogue located on the northwest corner of Denison Square and Bellevue completes an axial focus across the west side of the square connecting to Denison Avenue that shifts off Bellevue and runs south from the square.

The physical edges of the square are made on Denison Square by partially open lawn with a sidewalk that changes midway along its length to a fence, berm and dense bushes next to a sidewalk that ends at Augusta Avenue. The face to Augusta is open at the northeast corner, but fenced along its remaining length, continuing around the south corner to make a restricted edge half of the length on the south edge. The remaining south edge is made by a row trees but with no sidewalk. The west edge is made by trees with a sidewalk.

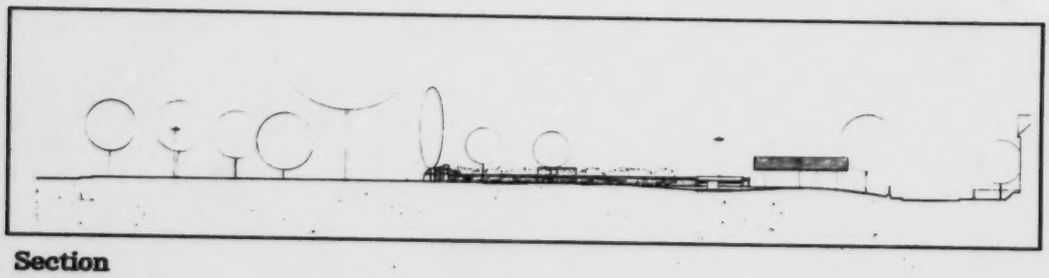
Use



Movement



Section and Elevation

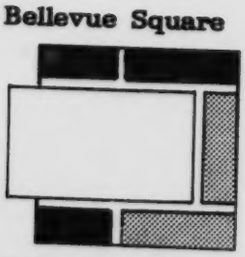


Section

A main entrance is built at the northeast corner at Augusta where a public washroom is sited. To the west of this washroom a children's playground on a sandlot is located, and to the south a large circular wading pool. An asphalt path runs diagonally through the square from the entrance to the southwest corner with a branch path that ends midway on the Wales Street edge. The remaining area of the park is a green lawn with several scattered trees. The internal design of Bellevue Square does not present a complementary consistent edge to the facing line of houses. The potential of this open space as an intensively used public square has not been considered. The square is effectively enclosed by its surrounding built form and the space provides a strong contrast to the heavily congested market, but the limited access, lack of even a continuous sidewalk around its edge creates many unused zones in the space. The berms and bushes create unsafe edges at night and obscure the view of the houses to the square, limiting the possibility of good overlook conditions.

The current everyday uses of the square, passing through, children's play, sitting, could be increased and intensified by providing hard surfaced areas for cafe eating, with concession facilities or more direct connections to neighbouring restuarants. The special neighbourhood festivals that happen here could be better supported by well-designed facilities: concessions, washrooms, lighting and more equal access across the faces of the square. An upgrading of the facilities could also initiate a more comprehensive public programme of exhibitions and performances to enhance the public life of the market and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Bellevue Square



Clarence Square

Ownership: Public

Frontage: 83m

Depth: 93m

Area: 7719sm

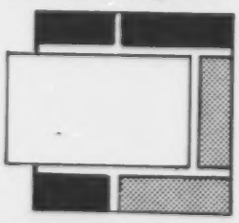
Form:
80% Soft Surface: lawn, trees, flower beds
20% Hard Surface: paved walkways

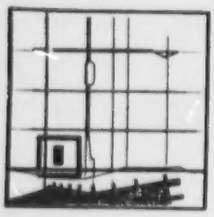
Edges:
North: converted commercial
South: warehouse/commercial
East: light industrial/commercial
West: Spadina Avenue

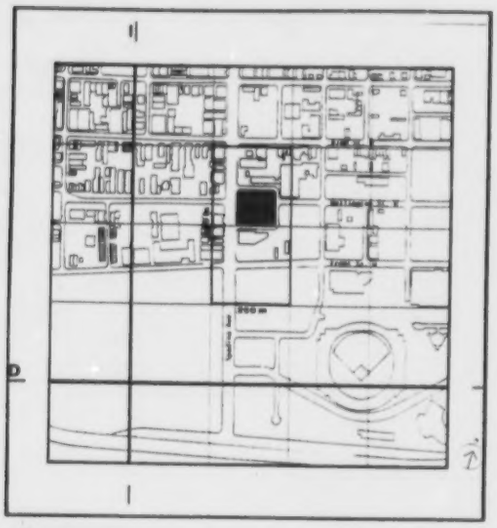
Use:
passage
casual (eating lunch, sitting)
bus turnaround

System: Wellington connects Clarence Square and Victoria Square to the west

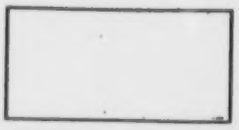
Clarence Square



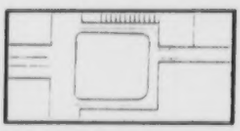




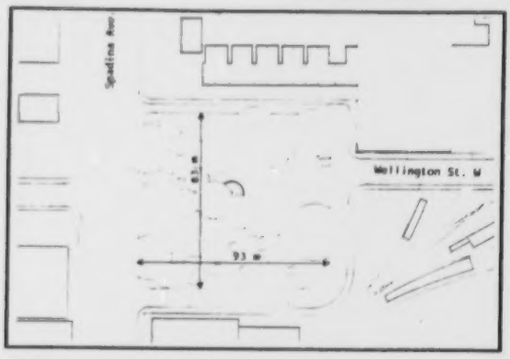
Context



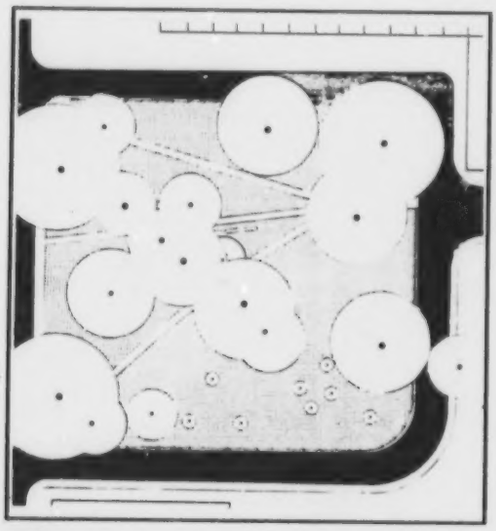
Edges



Ownership

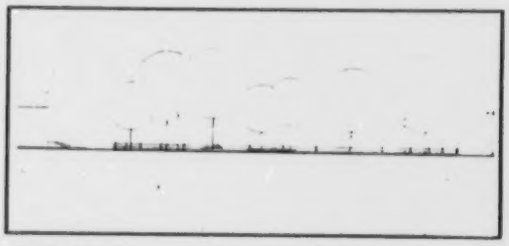


Site



Plan

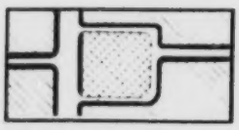
Section



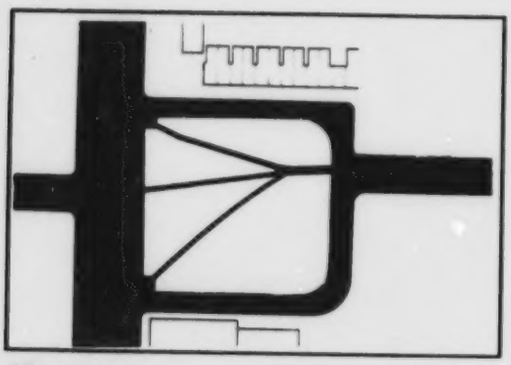
Section

Clarence Square is a traditional city square located at the edge of the garment district and the downtown core, within walking distance of the new domed stadium. The space of the square forms a break in the east west progression of Wellington Street, with Spadina Avenue forming a major west edge. Wellington Street continues west past Spadina to Victoria Square one block away. Clarence Square and Victoria Square, while physically close together, are in fact held quite separate because of the great width of Spadina Avenue and lack of provision for crossing through the heavy traffic.

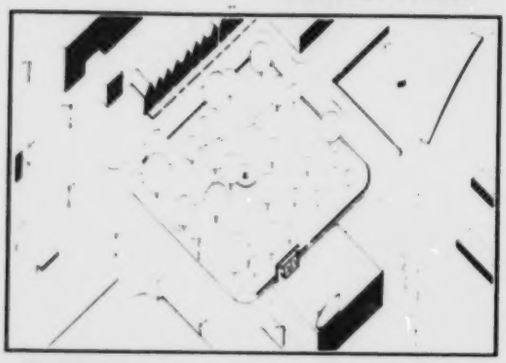
The north, south and east edges are made by one way single car lanes which encircle the square to where it meets Spadina Avenue. The physical edge to the surrounding streets are made by highway guards, with an open face presented to Spadina Avenue. Across the north street edge there is a consistent line of typical Toronto townhouses which have been converted to office and small scale commercial uses. The north west corner of the facing built edge is presently occupied by a converted gas station. Its south facing street is occupied by a four storey warehouse / commercial bulding at the south west corner position with a large vacant area next to it that carries around the corner of the square to Wellington Street. The consistency of the townhouses to the north provide a modest yet effective face to the space of the square, while the other uses, buildings and vacant spaces surrounding its other edges do not lend physical support to make a proportioned enclosure about the square. The surrounding spaces also do not provide complementary uses or facilities that could add to the animation of the open space.



Public/Private

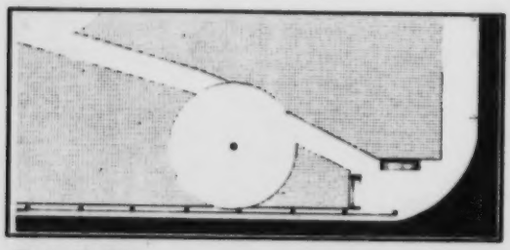


Movement

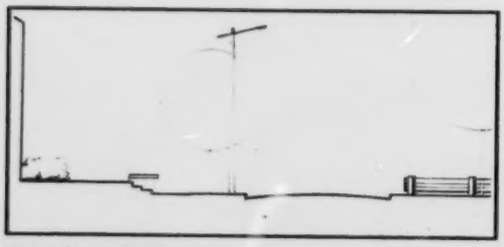


Volumetric

Use



Detail Plan



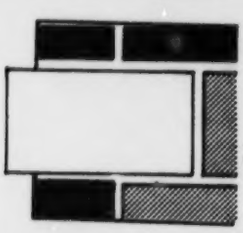
Detail Section

The actual dimensions of the square itself are more or less "square" (83m x 93m) and form a modest yet unique break from the normal grid street pattern, but the opportunity also exists to greatly improve the quality of the square by enclosing it on its facing street edges by a consistent height and quality of continuous built form. The vacant spaces about the square erode its very special character. Its very modesty in size requires that its edges be treated quite consistently to preserve its traditional space. Internally, the square is crossed by paths radiating from the east side. A fountain occupies a central position among the remaining green lawn and mature trees planted in a scattered pattern, with some provision of picnic tables.

Presently, Clarence Square is isolated from its surrounding context and enjoys little use other than limited number of people passing through. This isolation is due in part to the overwhelming traffic of Spadina Avenue, and the treatment of the surrounding streets as more of a traffic circle than a traditional square. This strong presence of traffic is increased by the buses that use this square as a lay-by spot, idling for long periods of time making the air quality very unpleasant.

These disadvantages present in Clarence Square are caused by obvious conditions. The current redevelopment of the surrounding area suggests that the square will potentially be used in a much more intense way and that the problems of the open space can be corrected by straightforward means.

Clarence Square



Ownership: Public

Building Use: Municipal Government Offices

Frontage: 120m

Depth: 130m

Area: 12,577m

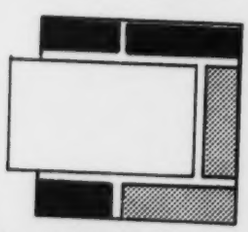
Form:
10% Soft Surface: trees, lawn, planters
90% Hard Surface: concrete pavers

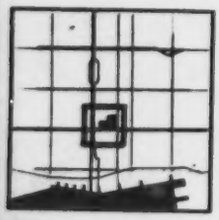
Edges:
North: New City Hall
South: Queen Street/Sheraton Hotel
East: Bay Street/Old City Hall
West: Osgoode Law School

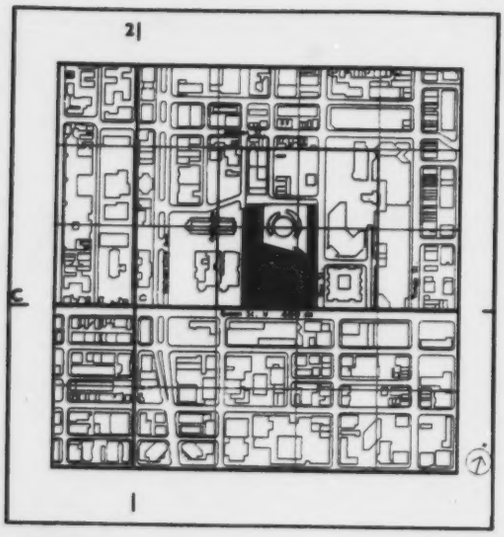
Use:
casual (eating and sitting)
concerts, demonstrations
passage
ceremonial
entrance
skating/reflecting pool
exhibitions, celebrations

System: secondary system of open spaces along the north side of Queen Street, fronting Old City Hall, Nathan Philips Square, and Osgoode Law School

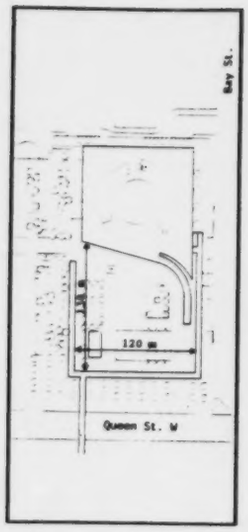
Nathan Philips Square



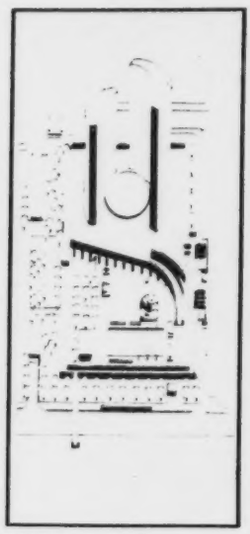




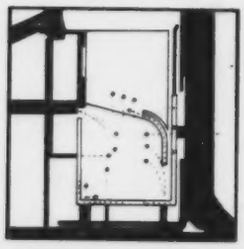
Context



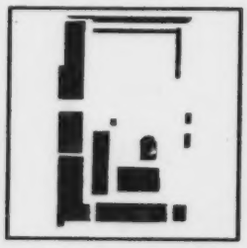
Site and Size



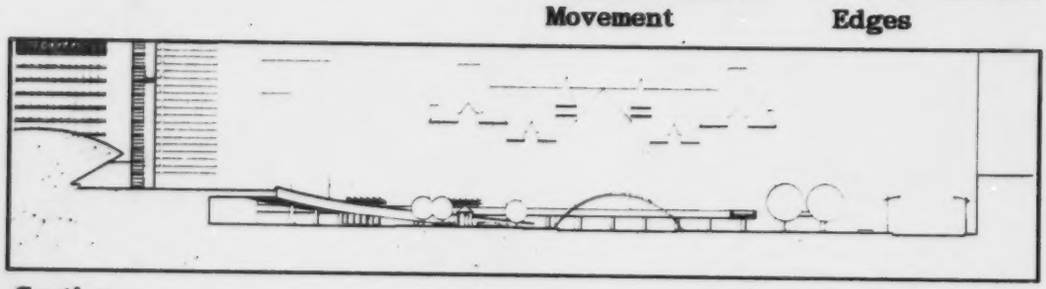
Volumetric



Movement



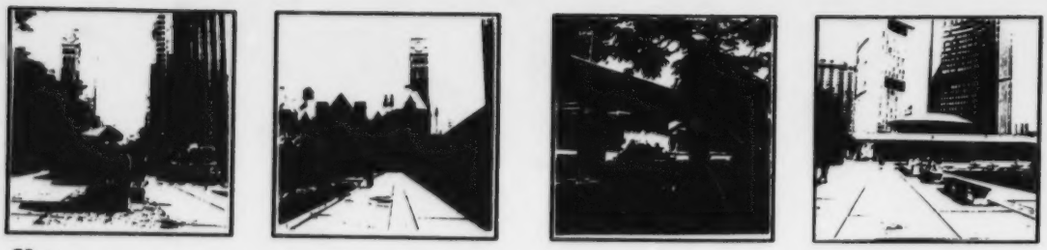
Edges



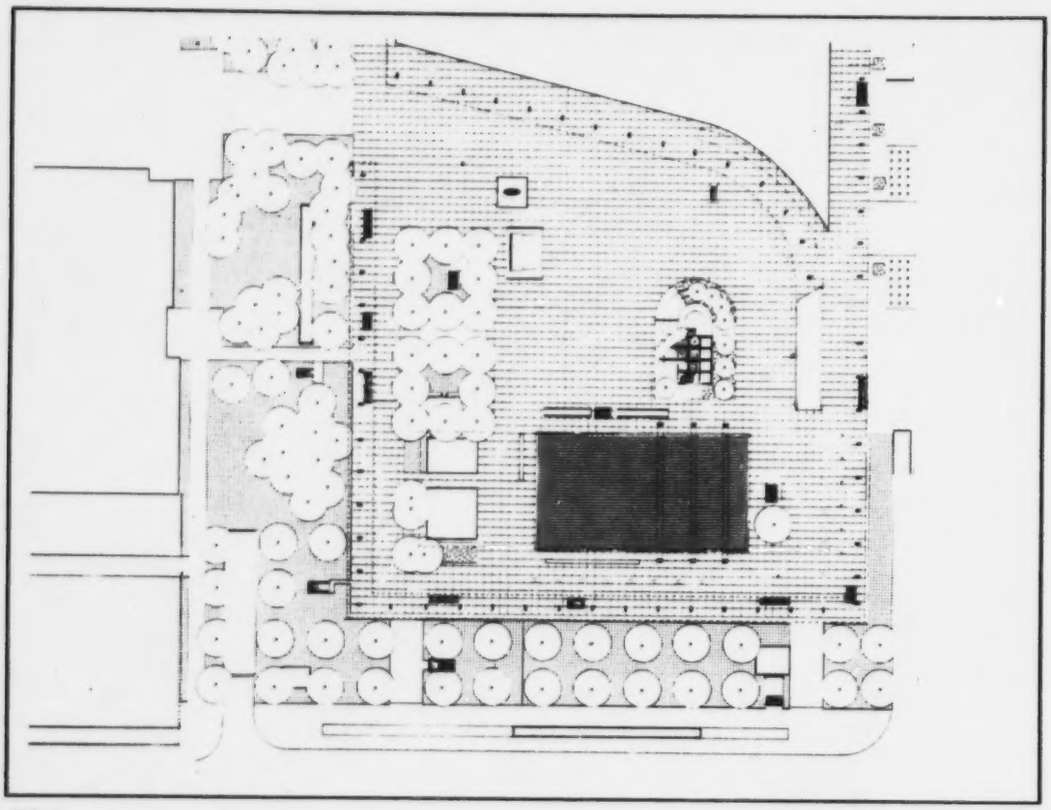
Section

Nathan Philips Square is the largest and most intensely used of Toronto's city squares. It occupies a city block bounded at its main face by Queen Street to the south, to the east by Bay Street, to the west by Osgoode Hall and the Law Courts building, and to the north by Toronto City Hall. Its west peripheral zone occupies what was once Chesnut Street, now forming a double access to the public parking lot underneath the square. The square forms a focus for its surrounding building context. To the west, the open space links into an open court / passage that connects to Osgoode Hall, the Law Courts Building, and further on to University Avenue. Old City Hall forms the east face of the square on the other side of Bay Street, and a large hotel is located across Queen Street to the south. The actual hard surfaced space of the square itself is set apart from the public sidewalk by several elements. A wide peripheral zone of lawn and regularly planted trees distances the square from Queen Street by 20 meters. This setback corresponds to the depth of the forecourt of Old City Hall and sets up a secondary line of open spaces that continue on to the large lawn of Osgoode Hall.

The western boundary is made by a forty meter wide green space with irregularly planted trees and small gardens that occur over the parking ramps. Within this space is located several sculptural works, and cross paths that connect to the open spaces connected with the Law Courts building and also to Elizabeth and Chesnut Streets to the north. The space of the square is further defined by a raised walkway which travels around the east, south and west edges of the hard surfaced square. This walkway connects to a bridge that crosses Queen Street to the hotel, and "dead ends" at the north west corner of the square. Access to the square is open all along its east, south and west faces, while its edges are nevertheless distinguished from the public sidewalks by those elements.



Use

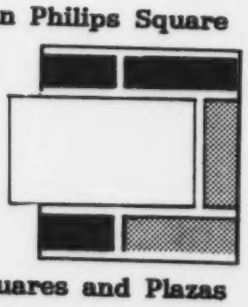


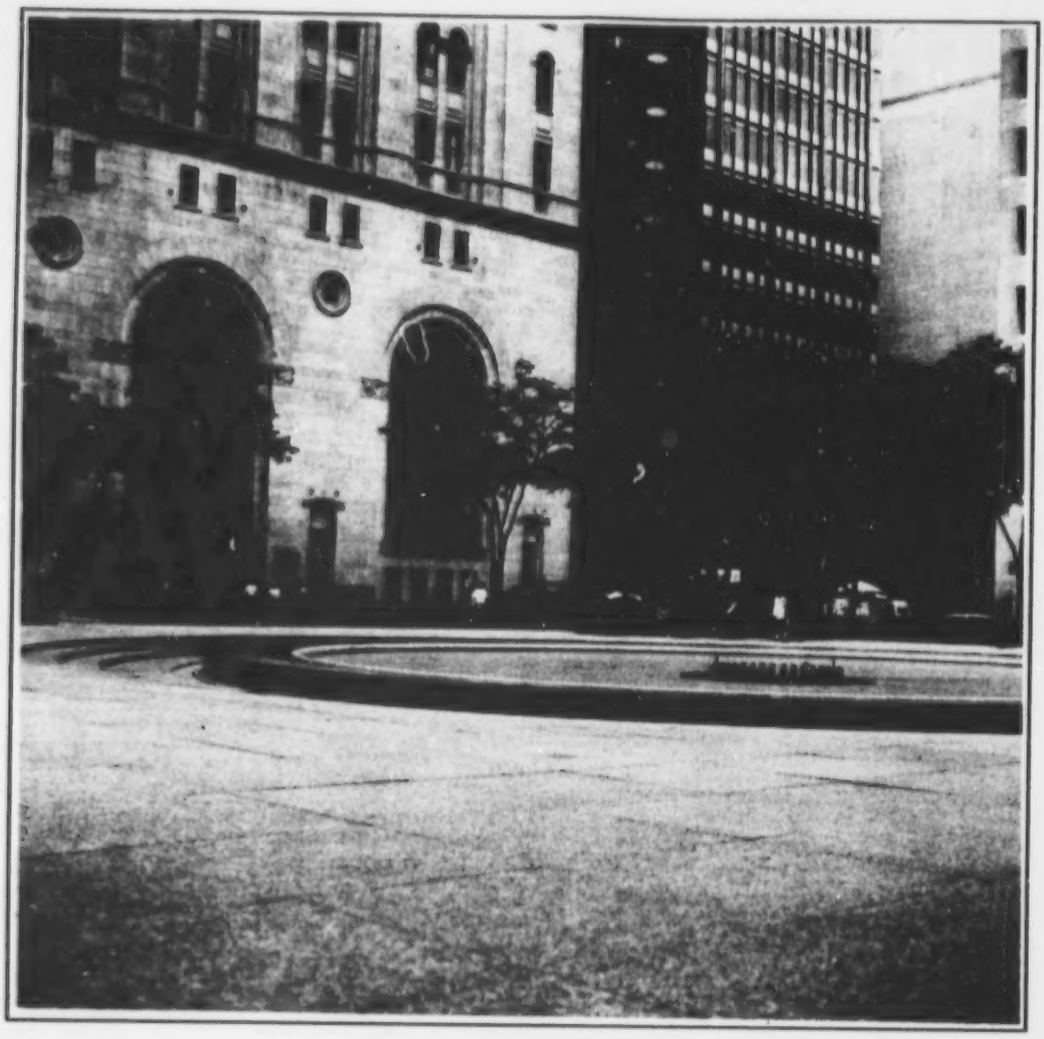
Plan

The low podium of City Hall forms a continuous covered arcade and entrance space along the north face of Nathan Philips Square. The covered arcade indicates a line of equally weighted entrances which avoids the overly centred focus that would then have dictated a more symmetrical and subservient role of the square to the building. Internally the majority of the square's area is a large hard surfaced open space. Set within a regular pavement is a large pool and fountain which is used as a skating rink in the winter, and is encircled by a sitting ledge and second ring of benches. A flanking band of public washrooms, elevator and stairs to parking below, a concession building and skate rental facility and a series of small gardens is formed on the west side of the square. Henry Moore's famous work "The Archer" is placed in a position closer to the entrance of the city hall. An ornamental garden and monument "The Peace Garden" was added to the square in 1985. A large ramp travels across the east side of the square to give ceremonial access to the podium level and council chamber.

Nathan Philps Square plays an important role as the symbolic centre of Toronto. The square is animated and continuously occupied all day by people going to and coming from City Hall, using the public parking lot below, skating during the winter, eating lunch, spending time in the sun, and crossing through to the surrounding buildings. The square is the scene for public demonstrations, celebrations and ceremonies. The grand scale of the square accommodates both crowds and the individual. Smaller elements set into the expanse of the open space create scaled down zones of comfortable gardens, the pool and the peripheral zone of green lawns.

Nathan Philips Square





Ownership: Private

Building Use: Commercial

Frontage: 106m

Depth: 108m

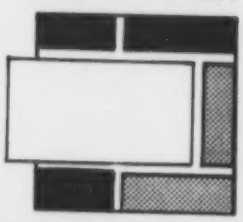
Area: 5272sm

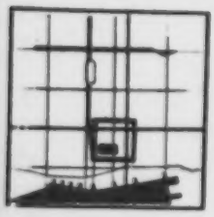
Form:
5% Soft Surface: trees, planters
95% Hard Surface: pavers

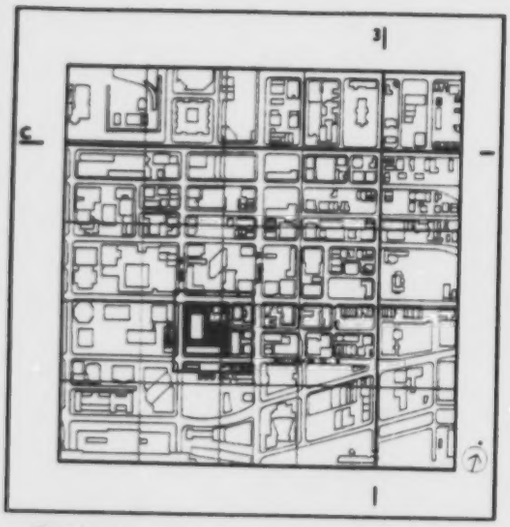
Edges:
North: Canadian Imperial Bank Tower
South: Commercial offices
East: Commercial Offices
West: New CIBC Tower

Use:
casual (sitting, eating lunch)
cafe seating
passage through block

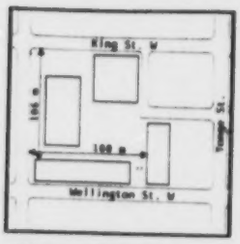
Commerce Court





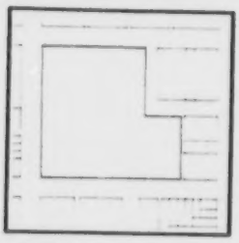


Context

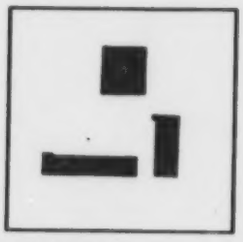


Site and Size

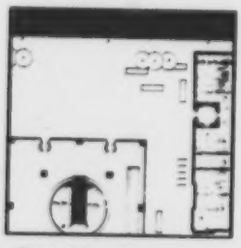
Use

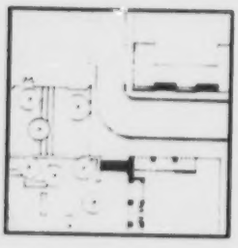


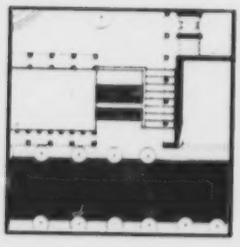
Lot

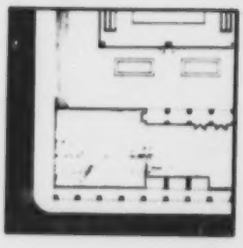


Edges

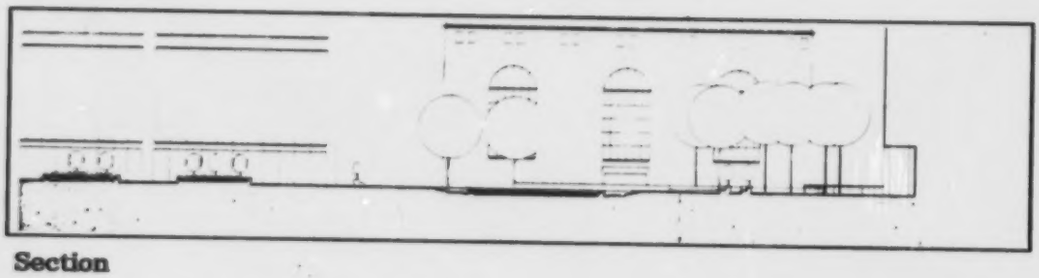








Detail Plans

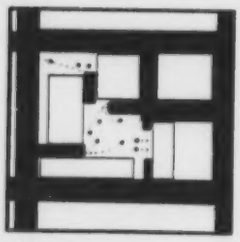


Section

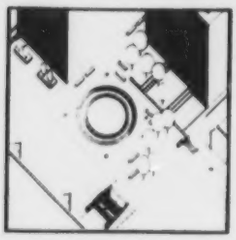
Commerce Court forms a composite of buildings and spaces around which the older Bank of Commerce and the newer Imperial Bank of Commerce towers are situated. Located at Bay and King Streets, the open spaces around the edges of the site act as "plazas" partially framed yet open to the middle court space through one of four open passages into the middle of the block. The passages are direct connections to the street, with little acknowledgement of the line between public and private ownership.

The central court contains places to sit, places to sit, trees, adjacent cafes, and a circular water fountain which provides an essential counterpoint to the surrounding rectangular towers. The predominant users are office workers from the surrounding towers who come to sit or use the space as a place to eat lunch. The offset position of the towers and setback from the street creates both a middle court space and forecourt to the plaza spaces.

Use

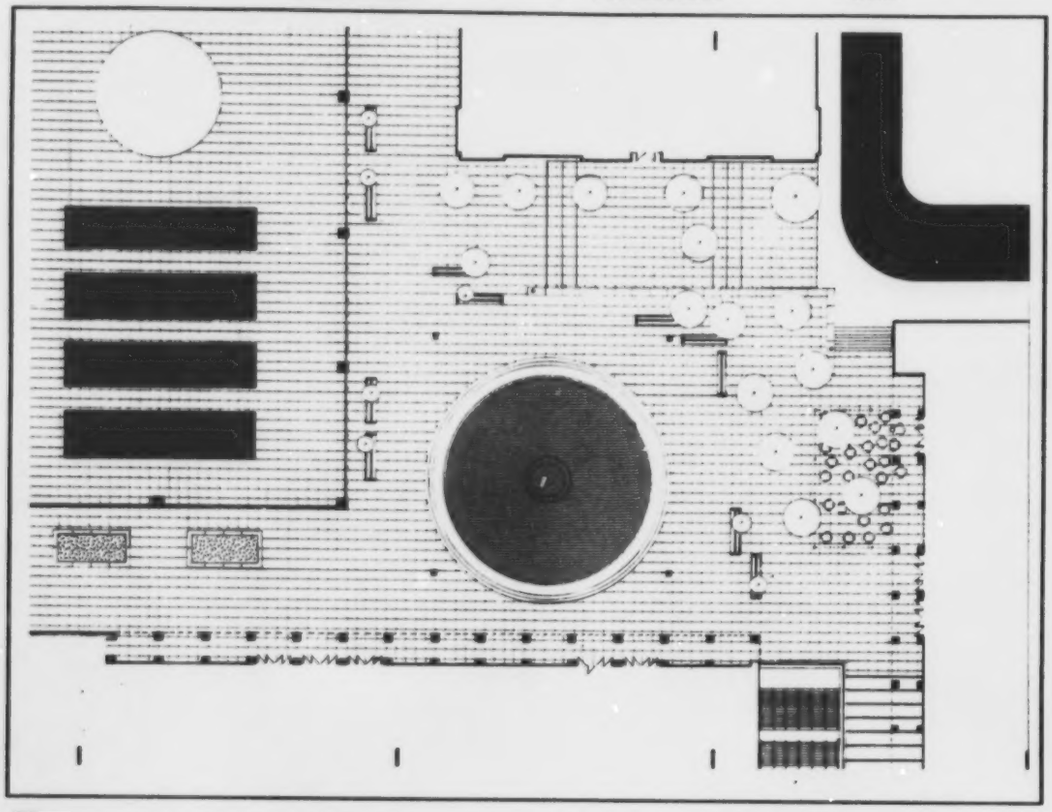


Movement



Volumetric

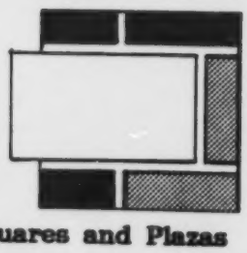
Use



Plan

The open spaces of the Commerce Court plaza constitute an example of a simple but elegant composition arrived at through a refined geometry that provides a pleasing balance between the built form and the open space. Developments currently being built at its periphery have caused some shade problems that may affect its public attraction. This could be counteracted by a more animated edge that could be developed in adjoining buildings. Currently the potential of more publicly oriented uses at its built edges has not yet been recognized, and the plaza is not as intensively used as it might be.

Commerce Court



Ownership: Private

Building Use: Commercial

Frontage: 217m

Depth: 264m

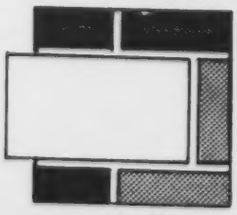
Area: 20,695sm

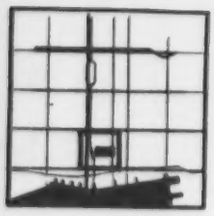
Form: 40% Soft Surface: lawn, trees, planters
60% Hard Surface: pavers

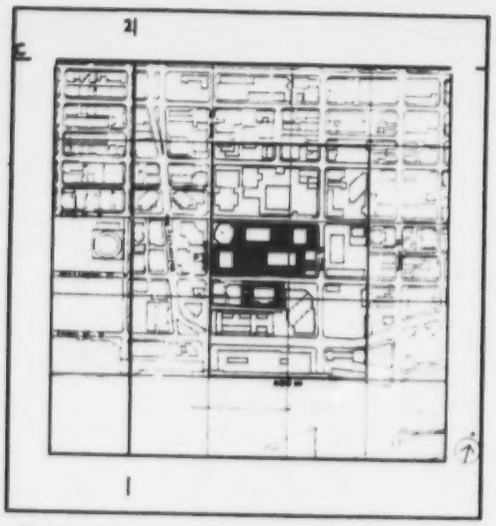
Edges:
North: Commercial Tower
South: Wellington Street
East: Commercial Tower
West: Commercial Tower

Use: casual (sitting, eating lunch)
passage through block

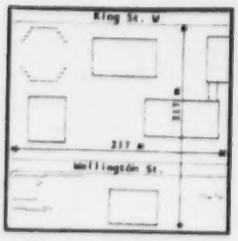
Toronto Dominion Centre



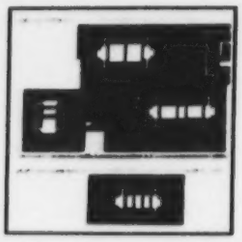




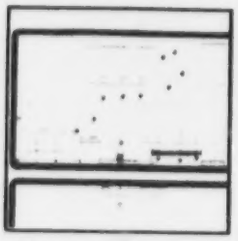
Context



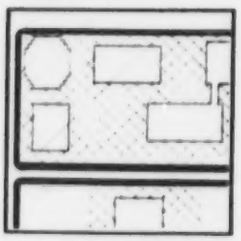
Site and Size



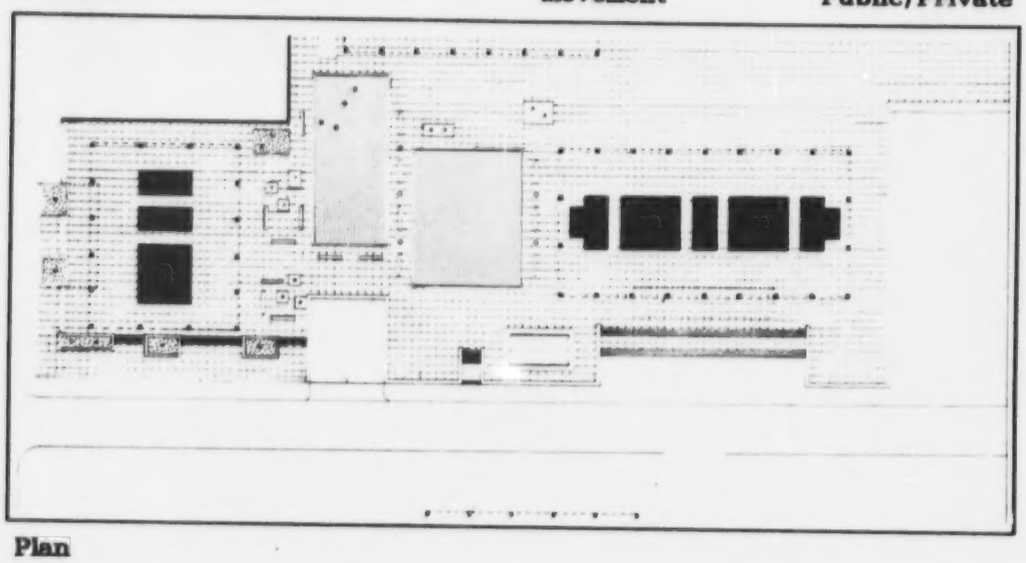
Edges



Movement



Public/Private

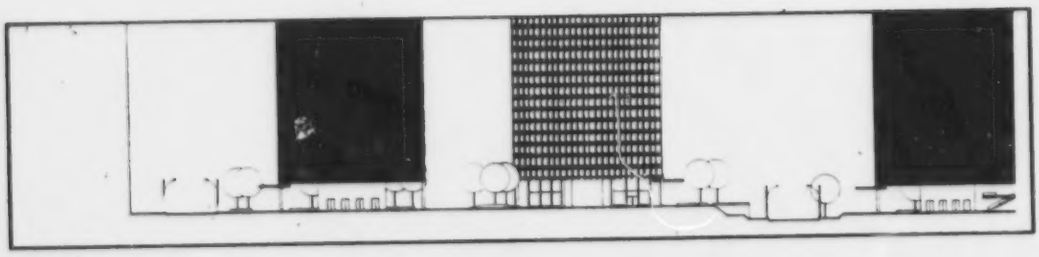


Plan

Located on an entire city block, the **Toronto Dominion Centre**, designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1963, consisted of three towers and a banking hall on a site free of cars and traffic. The more recent tower located on a block to the south of the centre is a further growth of the banking headquarters complex. The banking towers are matte black exposed steel.

Use

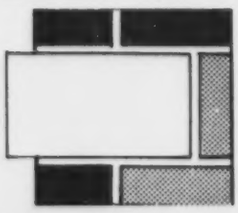
Volumetric



Section

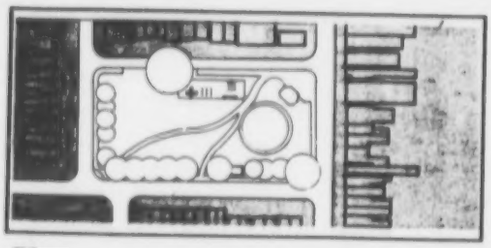
The position of the towers on the site are composed alternately to reinforce the openness of the site and to create a spatial complexity in which open corners of the block lead into internal semi-enclosed spaces. The composition of the open spaces, although limited at the site's edges and boundaries, contrast with the surrounding buildings and street contexts. The connected spaces of the plaza, while owned privately by the banking headquarters, treat the pedestrian space of the street as an open and continuous zone.

Toronto Dominion Centre



Toronto

Bellevue Square



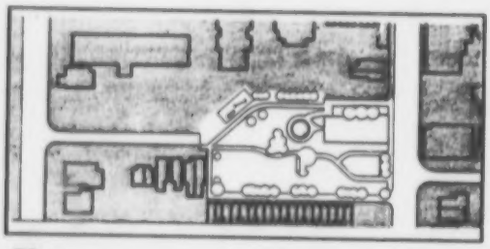
Plan

View

Bellevue Square is a small square that occupies one entire block in a dense commercial and residential neighbourhood located in the Kensington Market area of Toronto. The square is surrounded by a homogeneous pattern of houses with lawns and gardens that face onto the planted green space of the square.

Toronto

Cawthra Square



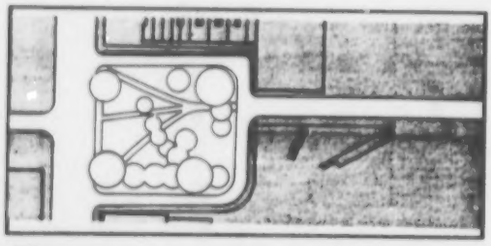
Plan

View

Cawthra Square is located in the North Jarvis district of Toronto in a historic area. It is an intensely and frequently used planted square slightly hidden from Church Street. Its main face is made at Church Street in an area of busy commercial traffic and activity. A small residential lane blocked by a high masonry wall forms the north edge. The movement system of the square moves west to the street forming the eastern limit. The south edge of the square is made by another high wall that divides it from a private commercial building and highrise residential tower behind. The edges are not well defined and result in marginal ambiguous dead end areas.

Toronto

Clarence Square

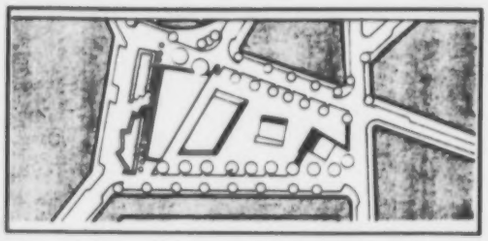


Plan

View

Clarence Square is one of a few traditional Toronto squares still in existence, forming one pole of a pair of squares connected along Wellington Street. The width and heavy traffic of Spadina Avenue south of King Street and the absence of any pedestrian crossing close to Clarence Square has isolated the square from its twin and made the condition of the site increasingly hostile both in terms of its environmental qualities and its potential for enjoyment as a public space.

Rotterdam



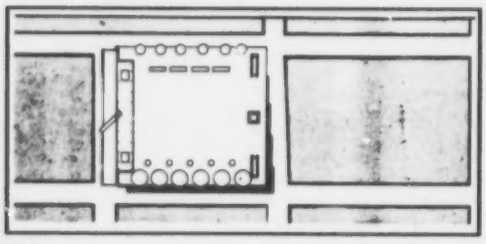
Bospolderplein

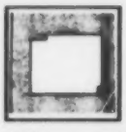
The Bospolderplein square project by Jaume Bach and Gabriel Mora is a design for one of three squares that were the subject of "Rotterdam '88 The City: A Stage" programme sponsored by the Rotterdam Arts Council. Six designers were asked to renovate three existing squares in Rotterdam. The Bach/Mora design responds to the secluded area of the square and the need for urban design of the areas located in the middle of an extremely densely populated residential area.

Plan

View

Barcelona





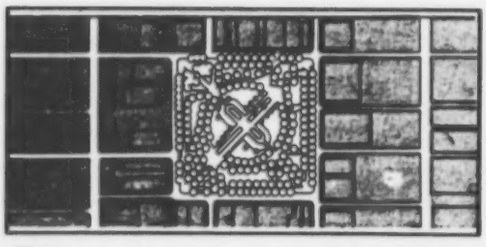
La Placa del Sol

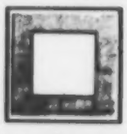
The Placa del Sol is a square designed by Back and Mora as one of a series of smaller squares hidden amongst narrow streets in a dense urban fabric in a township of Barcelona. Because of its congested context, an open sunlit space and points of interest within the urban framework is provided by contrast. The limitations of scale of the square are solved by the designers by expanding its borders to include the adjacent street.

Plan

View

Philadelphia





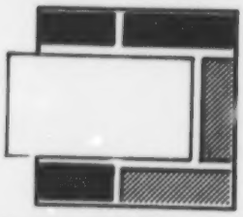
Rittenhouse Square

Rittenhouse Square, laid out by William Penn, is one of a series of squares of eight acres each located in a quadrant of streets forming neighbourhoods. These squares were set aside for the common use and enjoyment of all its citizens.

Plan

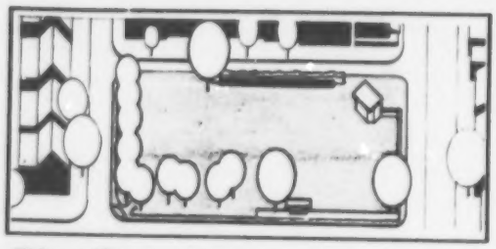
View

Comparative World Examples

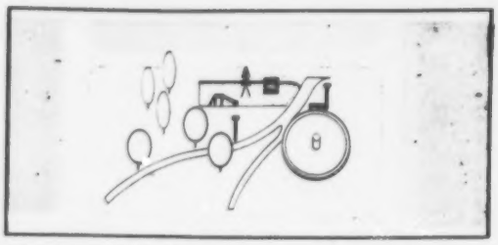


Toronto

Bellevue Square



Edge Elements

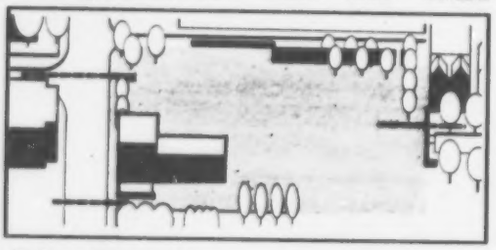


Internal Elements

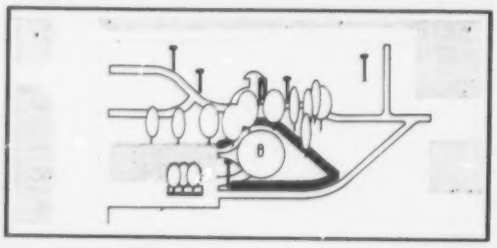
The square contains typical park recreational equipment and facilities, structures, sandpits, swings and a large circular children's wading pool. The conditions at the edges of the square abutting pedestrian sidewalks are attempts to limit and control access into the square at certain street faces. Berms, trees and planting along with steel fencing, screen the square from the adjacent built form and streets that in fact are compatible in scale and could contribute greatly to the character and legibility of the open space. The square is an unexpected break from the busy and densely built context by providing a public space for a diverse ethnic population. Local celebrations and festivals occur as part of the ritual and everyday use of the square, yet these uses are hampered by the separation of the space of the square from its surrounding context and the more "park-like" treatment of its interior.

Toronto

Cawthra Square



Edge Elements

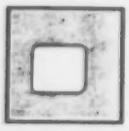


Internal Elements

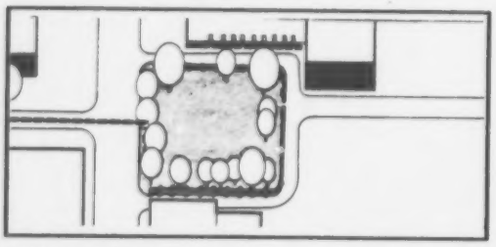
The square is occupied by a community structure located on Church Street that provides a face to the street and a face into the square. The community centre forms an important focus physically and programmatically for the square. Although the square is well landscaped and provides a route through and around the space, its separation from the private buildings around its edges could be improved.

Cawthra Square, although currently designed and furnished as a park, is located in a highly dense area of the city. It provides the setting for many city events and rallies along with its casual uses of strolling, eating lunch and passing through the block. It is also the site for an AIDS memorial and so becomes the setting for ceremonies and public testimonies. Cawthra Square functions as a square but does not yet reflect its public importance in its internal design and facilities.

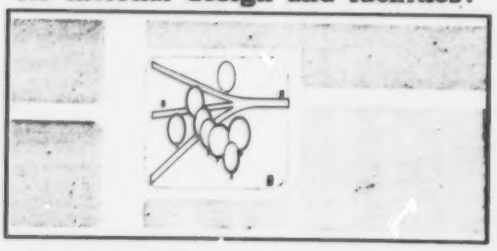
Toronto



Clarence Square



Edge Elements

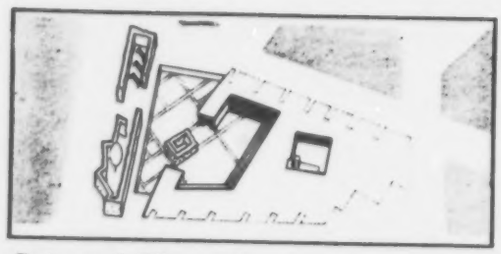


Internal Elements

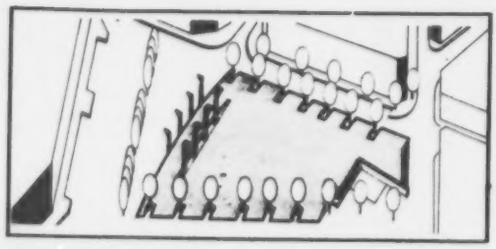
The surrounding buildings are separated from the square by a highway road guard. Its surrounding streets, used by the TTC for lay-bys for buses, generate unpleasant levels of exhaust smoke. The internal layout of the square consists of random tree planting in a green lawn with crossing paths and a central fountain. The square is underdeveloped as a potential public space in an area that is now experiencing new developments.

The square is modestly but effectively addressed by an existing row of townhouses on its north face, containing small offices that do not add any substantial support to the square. However, a substantial potential for improvement does exist. Modifications or additions of new and more sympathetic structures that will reinforce an enclosure of the outdoor "room" and provide complementary uses at grade could greatly add to its public amenity.

Rotterdam



Internal Elements

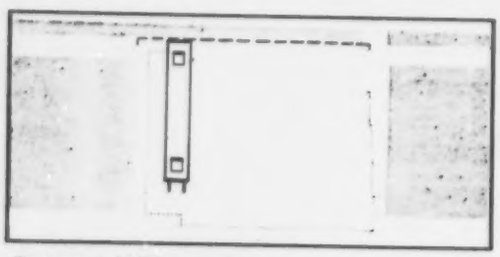


Edge Elements

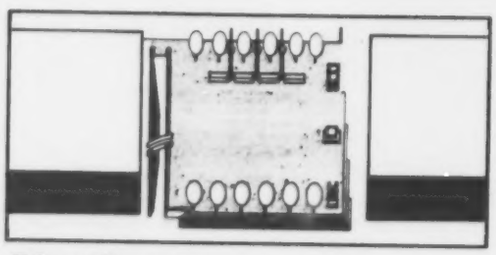
Bospolderplein

The surrounding row houses and mansions that were originally part of the surrounding residential structures have changed to make way for larger apartment buildings. The planted nature of the square with radiating walkways and circular promenade is still part of its present character and is used by a diverse of people in addition to those who live in the adjacent structures. The square serves a wide range of interests; it also is the site of spring flower shows, art exhibits, Easter parades and dog shows.

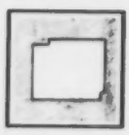
Barcelona



Internal Elements



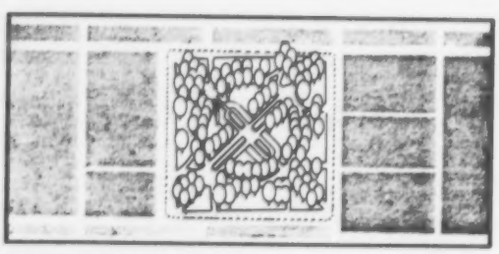
Edge Elements



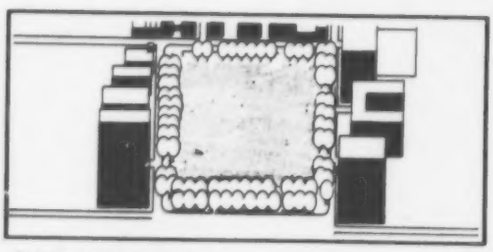
La Placa del Sol

The surface of the square is raised to subtley create limits to adjacent streets and provide parking underneath the square. Access to the car parking is contained within a curving bridge and small canopy. Trees are part of the stage set along with carefully detailed benches and lighting fixtures in a flexible arrangement that simply makes the space a place for relaxation and encounters.

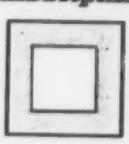
Philadelphia



Internal Elements



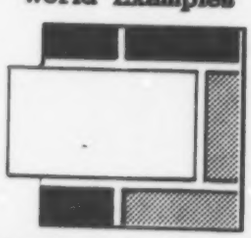
Edge Elements



Rittenhouse Square

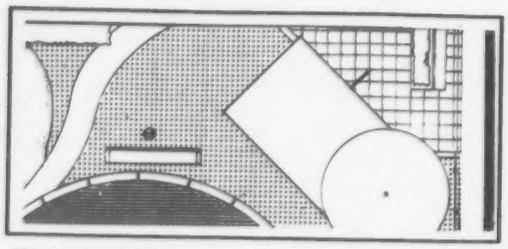
The designers of the square have attempted to achieve a diversity of spaces, accented by a diversity of designs. Rather than simply responding to specific functions, the designers have proposed individual kinds of spaces that can be used and interpreted in many ways. Protected areas, along with specific nooks, material and lighting solutions add to and are integrated with the principles of a multiple design solution versus a single functional approach.

Comparative World Examples

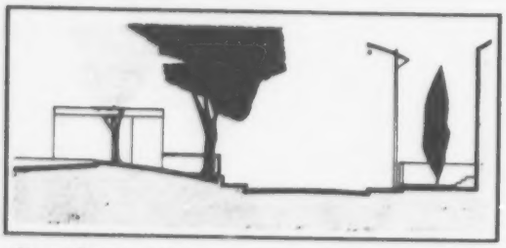


Toronto

Bellevue Square



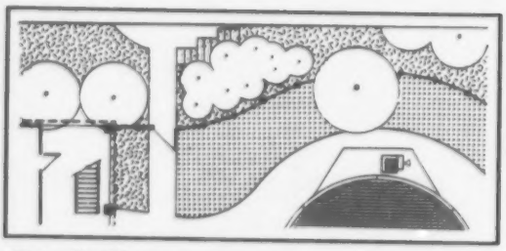
Detail Plan



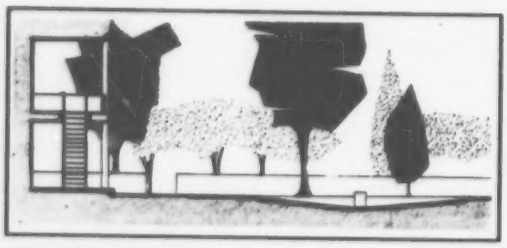
Detail Section

Toronto

Cawthra Square



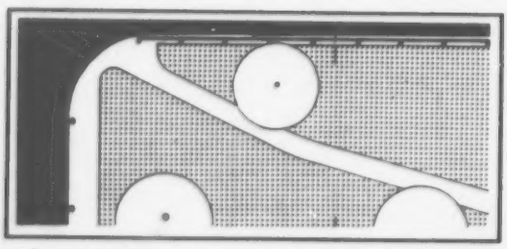
Detail Plan



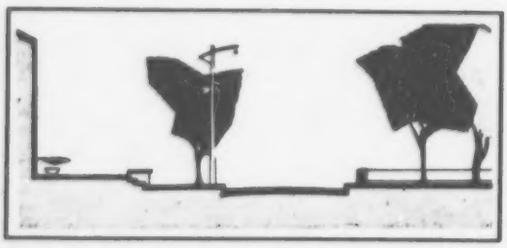
Detail Section

Toronto

Clarence Square

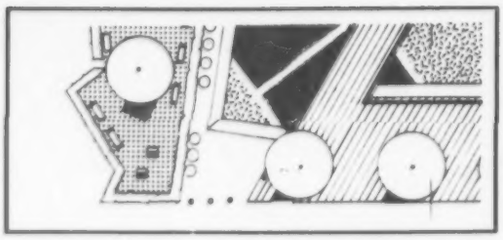


Detail Plan



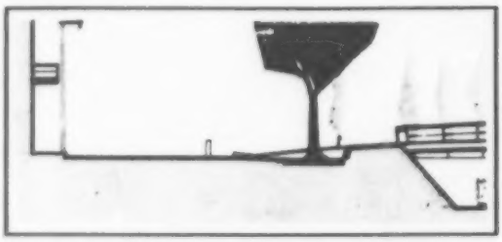
Detail Section

Rotterdam



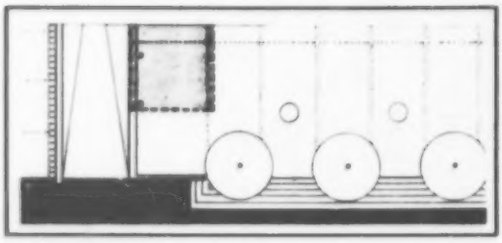
Bospolderplein

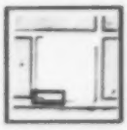
Detail Plan



Detail Section

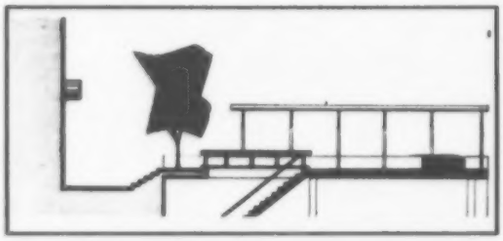
Barcelona





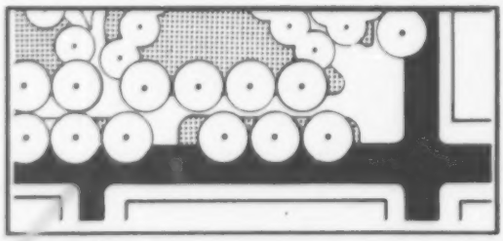
La Placa del Sol

Detail Plan



Detail Section

Philadelphia

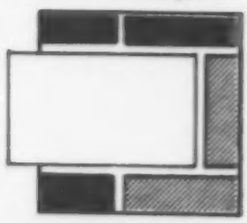


Rittenhouse Square

Detail Plan

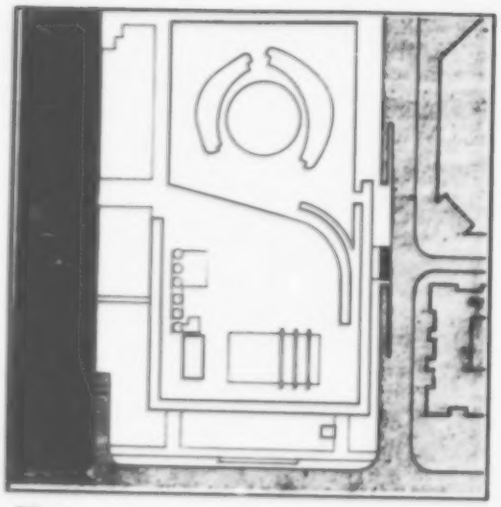
Detail Section

Comparative World Examples



Toronto

Nathan Philips Square



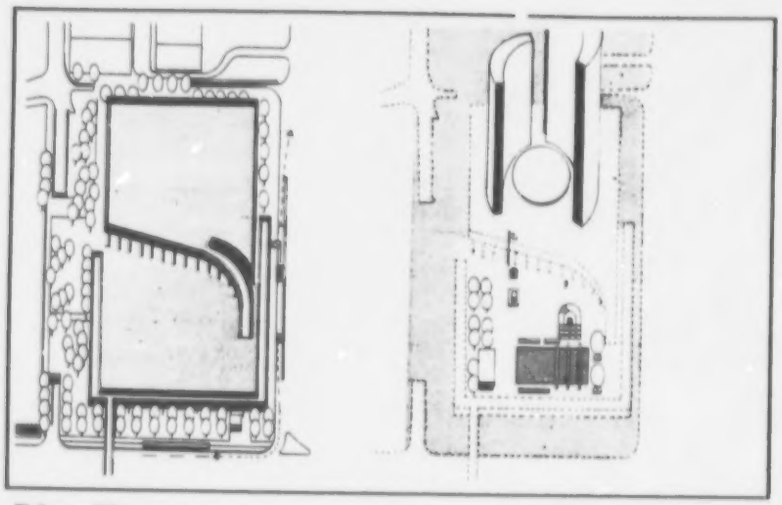
Plan

View

Nathan Philips Square is the largest and most intensely used of Toronto's city squares. The square forms a focus for the surrounding building context, linking into a system of passages, forecourts and small urban places. The low podium of City Hall forms a continuous covered arcade at the entrance space along the north face of the square. An elevated ambulatory creates a sense of enclosure to the remaining faces.

Toronto

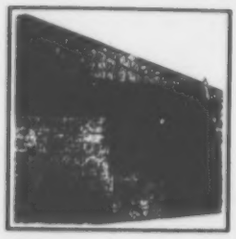
Nathan Philips Square



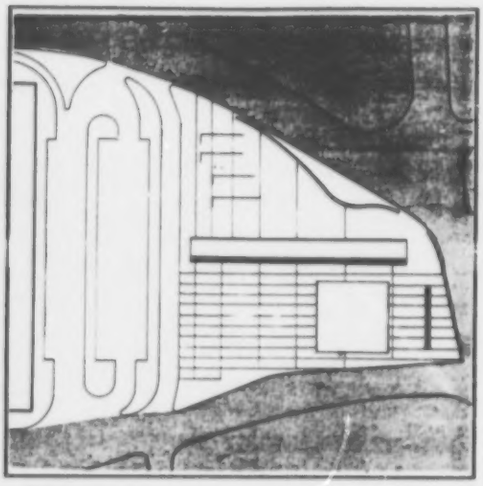
Edge Elements

Internal Elements

Barcelona



View



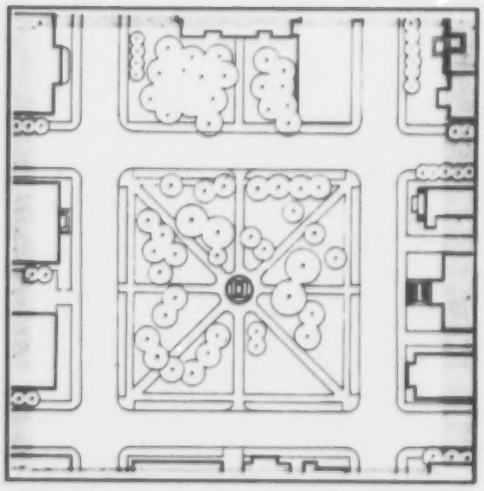
Plan

La Placa del Paisos Catalans

The Placa del Paisos Catalans, designed by Helio Pinon and Albert Vaplana, Architects, in Barcelona, is a public square that reflects the qualities of the space's origins. The site is perceived as a horizontal surface upon what was previously a common parking lot surrounded by a disparate group of office buildings. The intervention uses a minimum landscape, hard surface, with no vegetation, as a response to the surrounding urban landscape.

Brantford

View

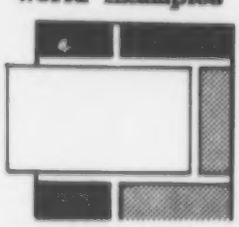


Plan

Victoria Square

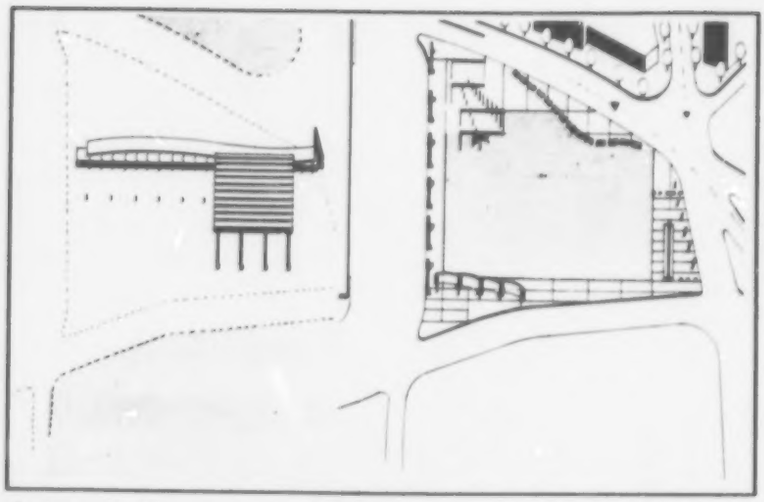
Victoria Square sits in the middle of eight surrounding city blocks which along their street edges contain various public facilities, banks, libraries, churches and other important buildings. The Brantford Courthouse faces onto the square and forms its main face, dominating it in scale and formal orientation. The forecourt of the courthouse works in conjunction with the open space of the square. The civic memorial of Joseph Brant sits in a plan of radiating walkways forming a "Union Jack" pattern. The open space of the square plays both a practical and symbolic role for the city creating a space of civic quality and publicness.

Comparative World Examples



Barcelona

La Placa del
Paisos Catalans

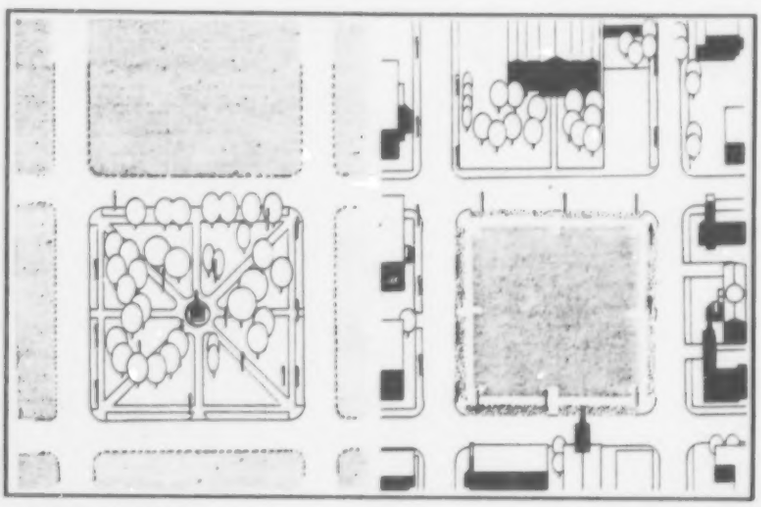


Internal Elements

Edge Elements

Brantford

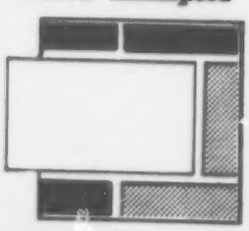
Victoria
Square



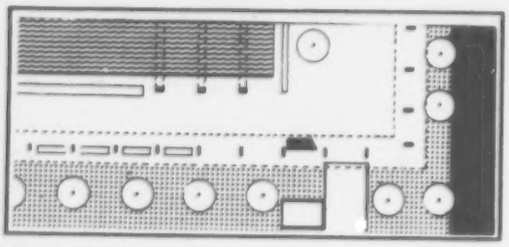
Internal Elements

Edge Elements

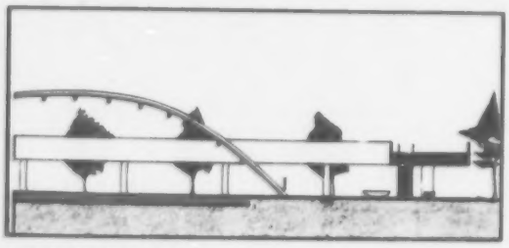
Comparative
World Examples



Nathan Philips Square



Detail Plan



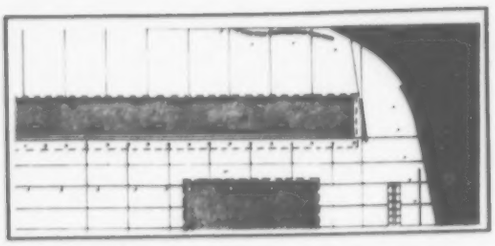
Detail Section

The square contains a skating rink, fountain, formal garden, landscaped sitting areas, Henry Moore's "The Archer", accesses to parking below and one concession building. Nathan Philips Square plays an important role as the symbolic centre of Toronto. It is continuously animated by people visiting and working at City Hall, skating, eating lunch, and taking part in political demonstrations. The space of the square allows it to be used comfortably by the individual and by large gatherings.

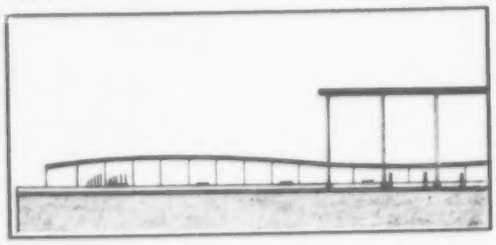
Barcelona

La Placa del Paisos Catalans

This new topography of the Placa contains a fountain in the guise of a water spout, an undulating pergola with a metallic roof, and a canopied monument with aligned undulating benches.



Detail Plan

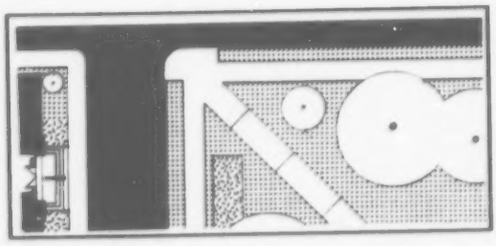


Detail Section

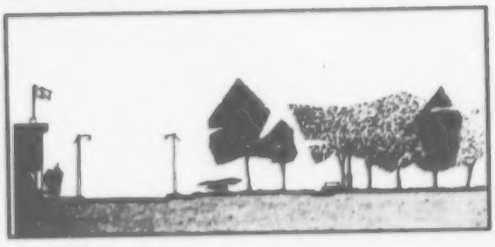
Brantford

Victoria Square

The presence of the New City Hall on a diagonal to the square, and the Capitol Theatre on the other end of the diagonal establishes the square as a hub and place of meeting. This square remains ons of the city's more permanent and memorable civic open spaces. By contrast, the original Market Square of Brantford has been developed into an enclosed shopping mall (similar to Kitchener), although a series of smaller church squares are still intact.

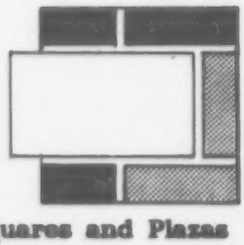


Detail Plan



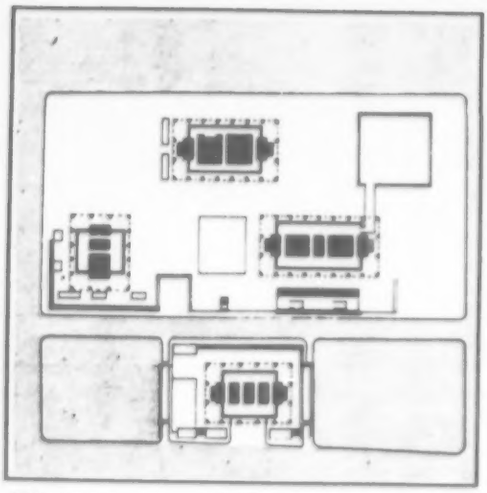
Detail Section

Comparative World Examples



Toronto

Toronto Dominion Centre

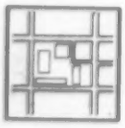


Plan

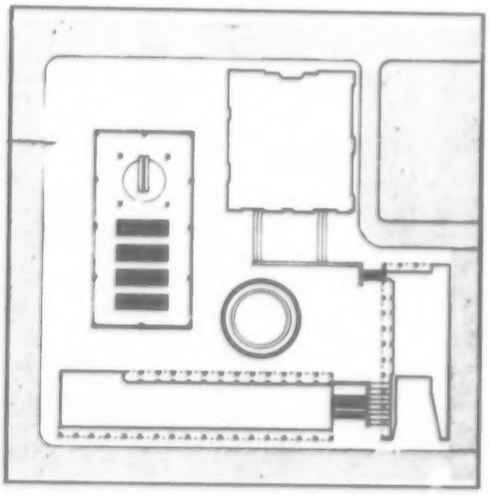
View

Located on an entire city block, the **Toronto Dominion Centre**, designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1963, consisted of three towers and a banking hall on a site free of cars and traffic. The banking towers are matte black exposed steel, as is the more recent tower located on a block to the south of the centre, which is a further growth of the banking headquarters complex.

Toronto



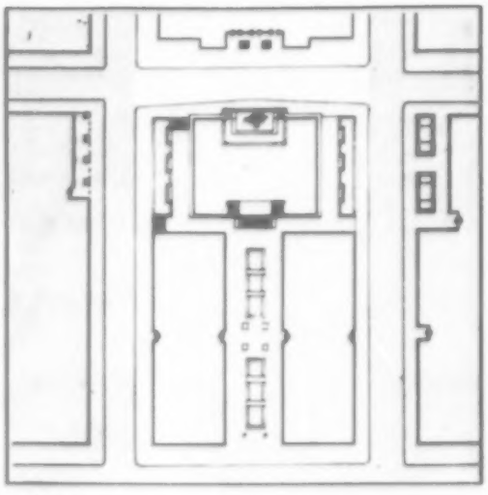
Commerce Court



Plan

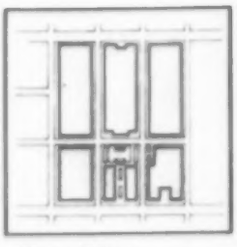
View

Commerce Court forms a composite of buildings and spaces around which the older Bank of Commerce and the newer Imperial Bank of Commerce towers are situated. Located at Bay and King Streets, the open spaces around the edges of the site act as "plazas" partially framed yet open to the middle court space through one of four open passages into the middle of the block. The passages are direct connections to the street, with little acknowledgement of the line between public and private ownership.



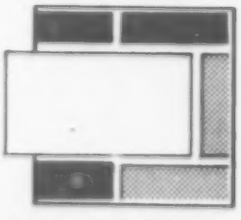
Plan

Rockefeller Center

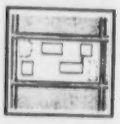


Site Plan

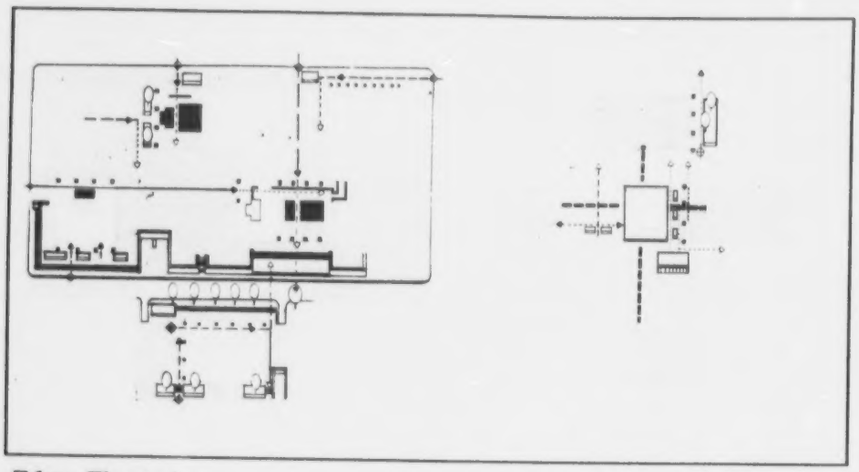
The plaza that forms part of **Rockefeller Center** is a relatively small space that manages to function well within a sunken condition. The plaza was developed in the 1930's and underwent an evolution which began to take on more deliberate and specific civic functions. The plaza was alternately the setting for dramatizations, war rallies, and entertainment (cultural, athletic and musical): a place of both military and political ends.



Toronto



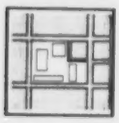
Toronto Dominion Centre



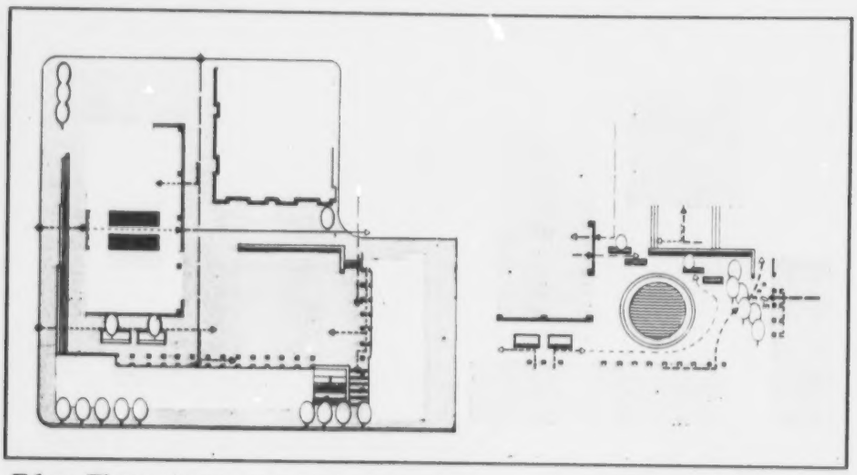
Edge Elements

Internal Elements

Toronto

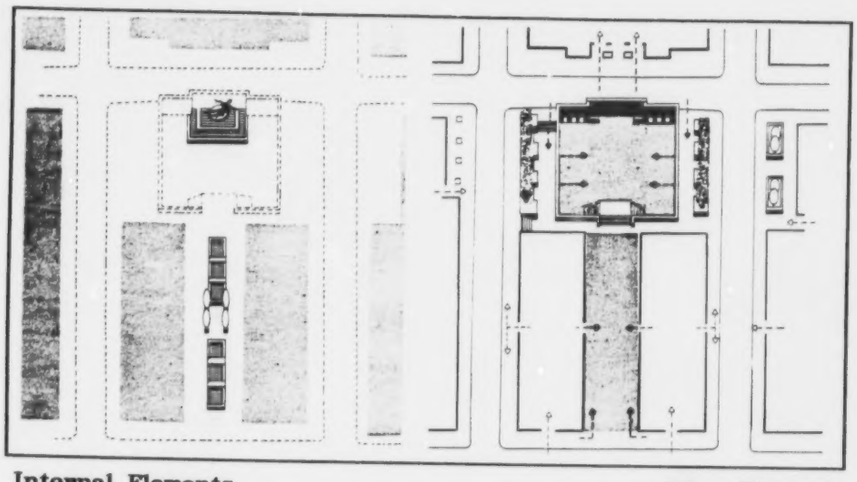


Commerce Court



Edge Elements

Internal Elements



Internal Elements

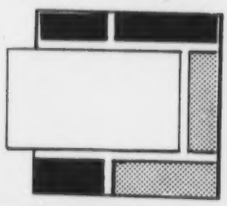
Edge Elements

New York

Rockefeller Center

Plazas

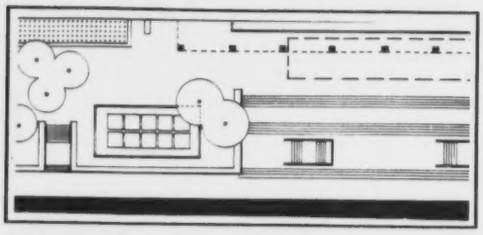
Comparative World Examples



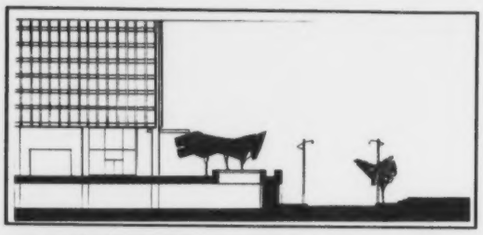
Squares and Plazas

Toronto

Toronto Dominion Centre



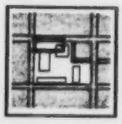
Detail Plan



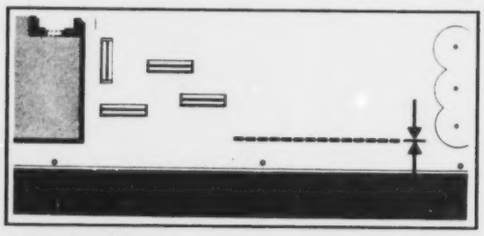
Detail Section

The position of the towers on the site are composed alternately to reinforce the openness of the site and to create a spatial complexity in which open corners of the block lead into internal semi-enclosed spaces. The composition of the open spaces, although limited at the site's edges and boundaries, contrast with the surrounding buildings and street contexts. The connected spaces of the plaza, while owned privately by the banking headquarters, treat the pedestrian space of the street as an open and continuous zone.

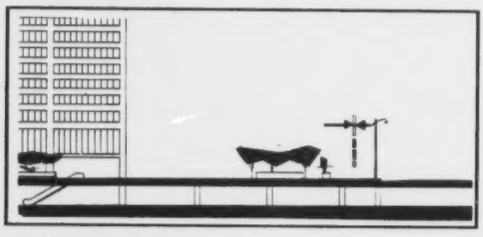
Toronto



Commerce Court



Detail Plan

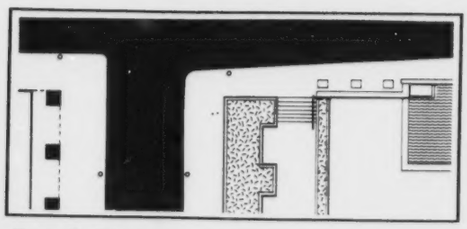


Detail Section

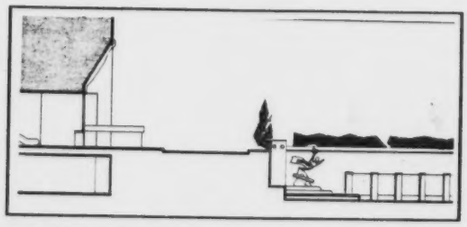
The central court contains places to sit, trees, adjacent cafes, and a circular water fountain which provides a vital counterpoint to the surrounding rectangular towers. The predominant users are office workers from the adjacent towers who come to sit or to eat lunch. The offset position of the towers and setback from the street creates both a middle court space and forecourt to the plaza spaces.

The open spaces of the Commerce Court plaza constitute an example of a simple but elegant composition achieved through a refined geometry providing a pleasing balance between the built form and the open space. Developments currently being built at its periphery have caused some shade problems that may affect its public attraction. This could be counteracted by a more animated edge that could be developed in adjoining buildings. Currently the potential of more publicly oriented uses at its built edges has not been recognized, and the plaza is not as intensively used as it might be.

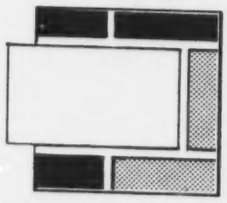
The plaza is sunken below the level of the street and forms the culmination space of a forecourt proceeding from 5th Avenue, flanked between the two International Buildings and dominant RCA Building. The plaza contains a focal fountain sculpture by Paul Manship called Prometheus. Surrounding shops and cafes provide places for outdoor dining. The edges and walkways around the plaza form a space for viewing, sitting and involvement in the life of the plaza. These aspects keep the lower level animated by the users of the skting rink and restuarants and by the spectators above.



Detail Plan



Detail Section



Observations and Comparisons

The three Toronto examples of small squares, **Bellevue, Cawthra, and Clarence Square,** possess strong similarities to each other in their unstructured and undesigned internal order. While the geometric shape and the physical contex of each square is quite different, the interior of each has been "furnished" with similar diagonal paved paths that disect the space, set in a green lawn with scattered tree planting.

The world examples, **Bospolderplein (Rotterdam), La Placa del Sol (Barcelona), and Rittenhouse Square (Philadelphia),** derive a strong ordering of internal elements that is largely based upon the geometry of each square. The irregular street pattern found in Rotterdam at the Bospolderplein is used to set up a series of diverse and highly urbane public space. **La Placa del Sol** uses a minimum of structuring devices that strictly adhere to the geometry of the square and create a highly defined open space within a very dense district of Barcelona.

The planting of the many trees at Rittenhouse Square derives its formal logic from the geometry of the square as well, while resulting in a far different design that still focuses on the open space as a distinct entity within its context. Part of this attention given to the physical form of the open space is also reflected in the consideration of the edges. While Rittenhouse Square has a formally conceived edge of lines of trees, the Bospolderplein and La Placa del Sol use both hard and soft materials to create a perimeter zone that defines boundaries but does not limit access.

Bellevue Square and Clarence Square in Toronto suffer from a undifferentiated design of the edge. The strong contextual situations of all three of the Toronto squares suggest a strong potential in developing designs that could respond to their formal spatial configurations and context by considering edges and internal structuring elements.

The three large city squares, **Nathan Philips Square (Toronto), La Placa del Paisos Catalans (Barcelona), and Victoria Square (Brantford)** present a range of different conceptions of the role of the square. Victoria Square in the small city of Brantford is a pure geometric "square" playing a largely civic symbolic role and provides an address for important public institutions and prestigious residences. The predominance of the "green" relates to the green forecourts of the buildings on all facing streets of the square.

La Placa del Paisos Catalans is formed by an irregular street pattern. Its edges are formed by streets and by an important public building, the train station. The use of this building informs the programming of the square, giving it a high level of animation in its everday and special use cycles. This is reflected in the design of hard surfaces and architectural elements like the canopies that are used strategically to minimally structure the large open space.

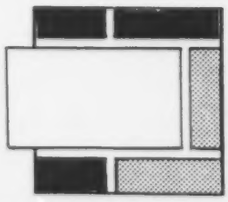
Nathan Philips Square reflects both of these types of squares. Toronto's square plays an important symbolic civic role for the city and is at the same time the most intensely used of the city's public open spaces. The siting of Toronto City Hall as one of the square's defining edges animates the space for everyday use. Elements like the skating rink / reflecting pool, set in a minimally furnished open space, also add to the animation of the square as an everyday attraction and use. The minimal yet effective structuring of the open space allows it to also function for very large gatherings.

Nathan Philips Square has a perimeter band of lawn and trees that sets up an intermediate zone between the public street and the square. The square itself is predominantly hard surfaced with small planted gardens within.

The three examples of plazas, **Toronto Dominion Centre (Toronto)**, **Commerce Court (Toronto)**, and **Rockefeller Center (New York)** present differences in composition and the perception of public / private open space. The Toronto Dominion Centre and Commerce Court are both asymetrically composed and form series of connected open spaces that are formed by minimal elements of steps, railing, lawns, and the major structuring elements of the banking towers. While these are not formally composed spaces in the traditional sense of nineteenth century designs of squares, they nonetheless represent a sophisticated and rigorous compositional method that is representative of its time.

Rockefeller Center is symmetrically ordered. The actual space of the plaza is smaller than the Toronto examples. Its chief difference is in its programming, that serves to blur the distinction between public and private space. The well-known skating rink of Rockefeller Centre, its surrounding stops and cafes, and its use as a stage for entertainment and rallies has defined the space as "public".

The central space of Commerce Court has provided minimal and elegant internal elements that engage more public uses than simply passing through the space, but active commercial uses such as cafes and shops are absent. The series of open spaces of the Toronto Dominion Centre are programmed as spaces of representation of the bank and as spaces to pass through, with a similar absence of commercial activity. In both the Toronto Dominion Centre and the Commerce Court plazas, the open space is clearly privately owned and monitored, while the Rockefeller Center is perceived as public.



Observations and Principles

1. Place Creation and Modification: Limits to Open Space

1.A Squares

- The square has at least three of its four edges directly adjacent to public streets.
- The space of the square is also formed by the heights and volumes of the buildings that face it.
- The square should be considered as a space in which the limits can expand, as in festivals or parades, to adjoining street space.
- Squares form a central focus to its immediate built context, and to a larger precinct surrounding it.
- A new square can modify its context by the subsequent development of a consistent built edge with supporting public uses.
- New city squares also form central focuses for networks of open spaces.

1.B Plazas

- The open spaces of plazas are composed by the siting of buildings within the rectangular portion of the city block it occupies. Those spaces that are created should all maximize environmental conditions of wind and sunlight.
- The siting of the buildings can create a series of connected smaller open spaces. The buildings forming these spaces should complement the open spaces with public facilities and support at grade.
- The street should be marked as a space distinct from the plaza to distinguish the public realm of the sidewalk from the private ownership of the plaza.
- The edges of the buildings and the open spaces of the plaza should always reinforce the public realm of the sidewalk.

2. Place Definition

2.A Squares

- The edges of both the neighbourhood square and the larger city square are defined in a manner that does not restrict open access at most faces.
- The open space of the small neighbourhood square provides a strong contrast to the intensity and consistency of its residential context.
- The edges of the small square can be visually linked to adjoining open spaces of neighbourhood streets, like forecourts, to suggest a natural extension of the open space of the square.
- The surrounding buildings can support the activity and intensity of the square by having complementary public uses at grade, and providing overlook conditions in the evening.

2.B Plazas

- The open space of the plaza is distinct from the space of the public sidewalk.

- The siting of buildings within the plaza forms smaller connected spaces. These spaces can be designed to have a separate nature but still exist as a part of collective whole with strong physical connections made to the public street.

3. Places of Possibilities :
Space in relationship to objects, to each other and to a whole

3.A Squares

- Large open spaces are created in squares to accommodate large gatherings and civic events. The design of smaller elements should act as complements to the larger space and not limit its use.

- The internal structure of the square works for both casual and spontaneous individual use and large crowds gathered for demonstrations, rallies, celebrations and ceremonies.

- The small square will function more often as a casual everyday setting. More small scale elements making different kinds of spaces allows for multiple uses and interpretation of the open space.

3.B Plazas

- The series of open spaces formed by the multiple arrangements of buildings in the plaza should be understandable as a progression of separate open spaces. The selection and composition of elements reinforce the autonomy of each space.

- The diversity of spaces and buildings can be shown as a collective whole by the use of common elements like surface pattern and material, steps and detailing. can be connected perceptually by smaller scale common and homogeneous elements such as patterns of surfaces, stair treatments and detailing.

Linear Parks

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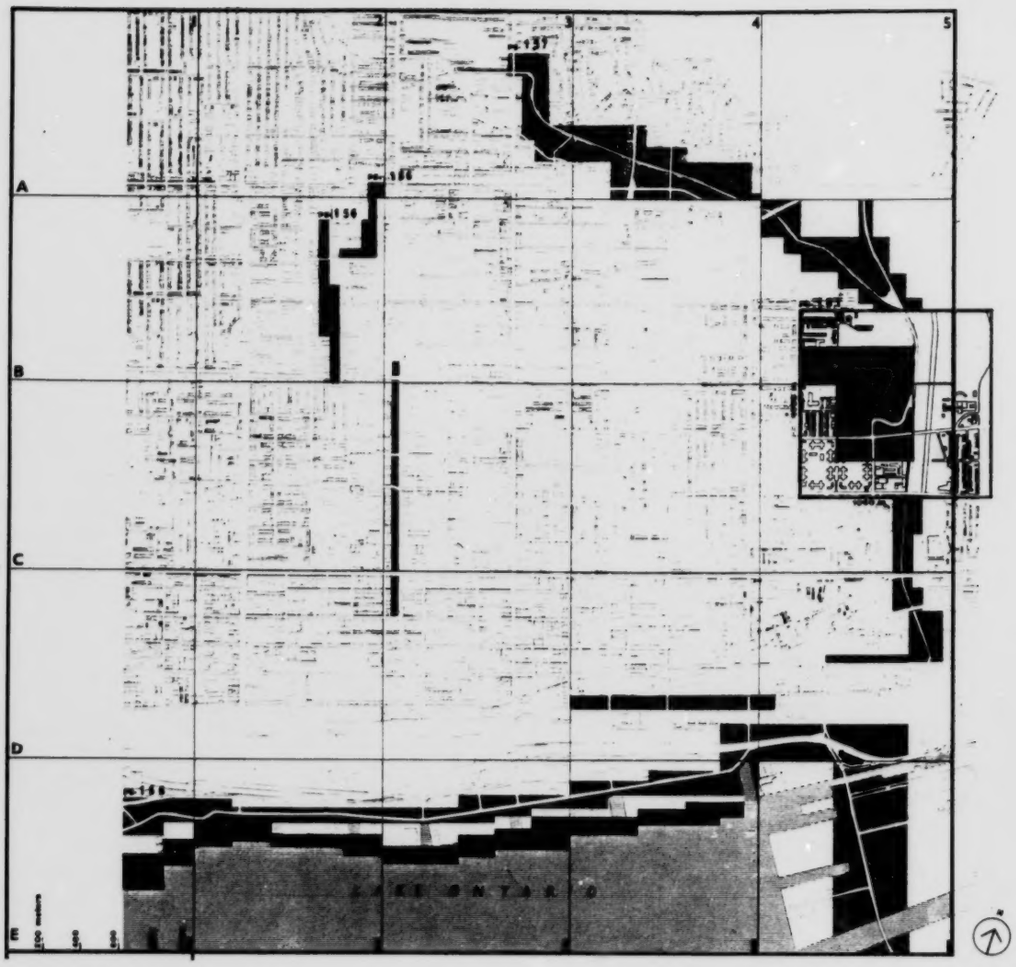
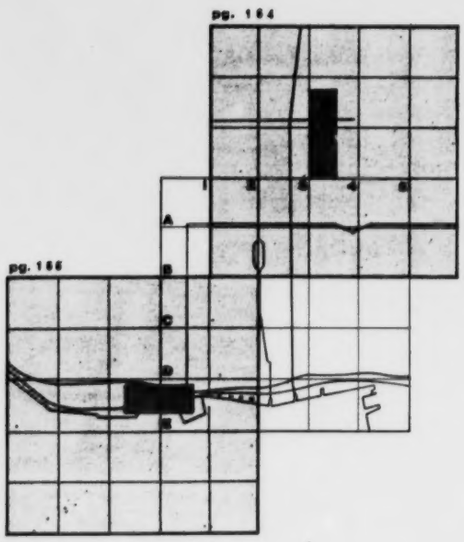
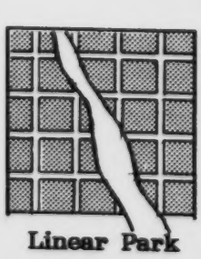


LINEAR PARKS **M A P P I N G**





Linear Park

Constructed Linear Park

Definition A man-made secondary system of movement that travels through the city grid.

Location Varies; can form connections between larger open space types.

Size Narrow in width, unlimited in length.

Edge Two parallel edges that move through many contexts. These edges can be marked by a specific planting to distinctly mark the linear system.

Landscape "Nodes", places with seating areas, water fountain, lighting and phone booths can be provided at regular or significant locations along the length. Width of the linear park should be determined by the number of types of movement, ie. separate joggers from walkers, from cyclists.

Use Promenade, jogging, cycling

Weather Provide shade with planted or built canopies, with sheltered zones at nodes.

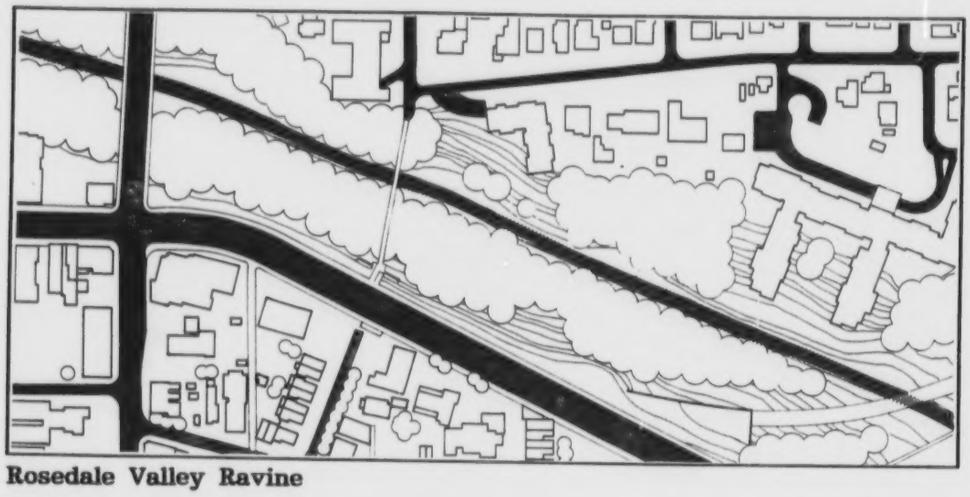
System The linear park can link other larger open space types through the city and should begin and end at other larger open space areas.

Other Keep the route of the linear system within easy access of public streets, not running through isolated areas. The linear route should begin and end in public places or larger types of open space.

Natural System Linear Park

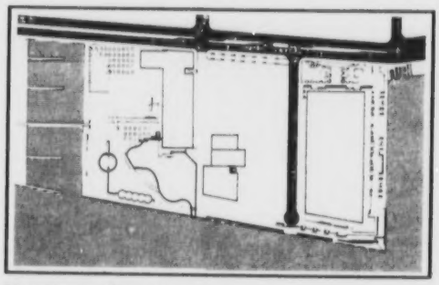
Definition	A continuous open space that moves independently of the city grid, following a natural landform, ie. ravine, creek, water's edge

Location	Natural landforms like water's edge, ravines, creeks.
Size	Varies, irregular with, expansive length.
Edge	Two parallel continuous edges travelling through a changing city context.
Landscape	Natural landscapes should be preserved and enhanced. Provide clear accesses and legible routes; no dead ends.
Use	Walks, jogging, picnics
Weather	Natural
System	The linear park can connect a series of urban parks along its length.
Other	Provide a clear system of repeating ways out of the linear park with emergency phones and good lighting.



Rosedale Valley Ravine

Coronation Park

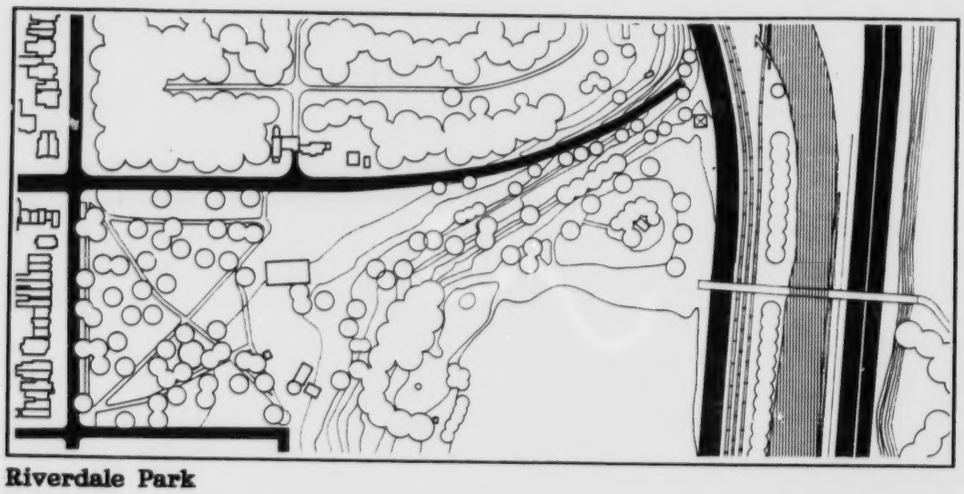


Harbourfront

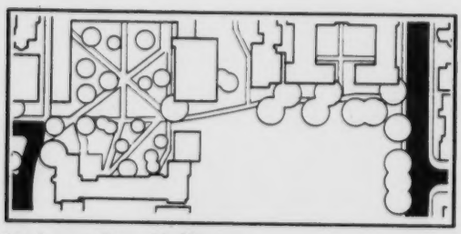
Definition

The linear park is a type of continuous open space that moves through and may be independent of the rationalized city grid. Linear parks provide sometimes dynamic, sometimes retreating counter routes to the normal movement along the city streets. Movement becomes the primary aspect of the linear park. The space is experienced by movement through it, by walking, by jogging, and by cycling.

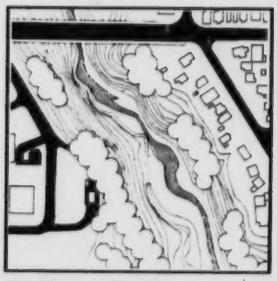
The linear park is subdivided into two distinct categories: **the natural system linear park,** and the **constructed linear park.**



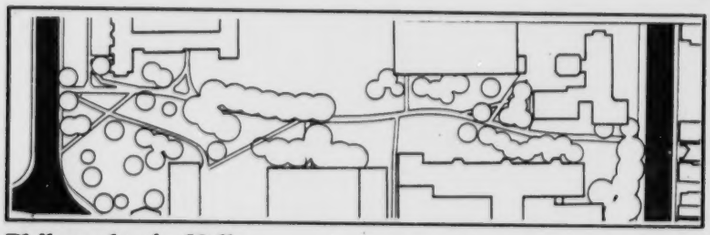
Riverdale Park



University College



Balfour Park



Philosopher's Walk

The Natural System Linear Park:

Toronto possesses two kinds of natural system linear parks: its smaller ravine networks that move down through the city ot the Don Valley to the lake ie. **Riverdale Park, and Balfour Park,** and those spaces naturally formed along the water's edge and consciously developed by the city planners, such as **Harbourfront, and the Beaches' Boardwalk.** A third type of linear park system potentially exists, but is buried in the submerged Toronto Creeks, like **Garrison Creek and Taddle Creek.** The traces of these buried systems can be traced through an informal system of small lot parks, and school yards, and present many opportunities to the open space planners of the city for further elaboration.

The Constructed Linear Park:

The constructed linear parks are consciously designed counter routes that offer alternative ways of moving through the city other than by motor vehicles on the normal city street system. These can be designed to connect a series of open spaces together or to simply contact a wide range of city conditions through its length.

This type of linear park includes the promenades, bicycle paths and jogging trails that wind through the city, like **Philosopher's Walk,** and the **Martin Goodman bicycle trail.**

Linear Park

Adjacencies / Edges

Both natural and constructed linear parks move through constantly changing contexts. This condition allows the planner of the linear park to take advantage of a range of city contexts by virtue of the park's adjacency, whether or not that adjacent land is publicly owned.

For example, much of what is seen while passing through ravines is in fact privately owned by the neighbouring residential properties, yet the picturesque landscape carries through without explicit differentiation in view. In a more concrete way, the bicycle route is essentially an asphalt ribbon and its edges can pass by, through, or between virtually any condition the city can offer, while maintaining a distinct separation from its surroundings.

The constructed linear park consists of essentially parallel edges. The continuous edges are the essence of this type. The indistinctness of the limits of Philosophers Walk owes its pleasant ambiguity of divisions of building lots to path to the University of Toronto's vast land ownership in that precinct. However this ambiguity can also be the cause of this linear park's demise. Where no exact limits are set, the domain of Philosophers Walk can constantly be infringed upon by over-ambitious building programmes to its eventual dismantlement and detriment.

While on one hand the constructed linear park can get alot of "return" for its actual investment of open space, on the other hand, this type has no control over its edges, so that the qualities of air, light, shade, shelter and sound are dependent on its neighbouring contexts.

To counter that lack of control, a sufficient width is required to be set aside for the promenade, the bicycle path and the jogging path to allow for a modicum of a distinct edge to be made with the ameliorating elements such as surface, form (elevation), vegetation, and lighting to enhance its surroundings where these qualities may already exist, and to carry through the idea of those qualities through the linear park where they do not.

The constructed linear park should be a recognizable element moving through the city as an alternate route that people can use with assurance that it will have frequent connections and be a continuous system.

The edges of the natural ravine linear park, while not having the immediacy of the bicycle path edge, must nevertheless create an easily read system of ways up and out of the system, with good connections to the city made in a conscious way, by a system of light, open space, and various forms of occupancy. Thus one can move through the ravine park with some confidence that a certain regularity of points of access will be encountered with an expected level of facilities.

The water's edge linear park type has more in common with the constructed linear park in that it can make clear "places" along its length with constructed connections to logical points back to the normal city structure with elaborated connections and termini.

Spatial Structure: Surface, Form and Vegetation

The real economy of the constructed linear park is that it needs only a limited surface and dimension of continuity to enjoy the ever changing context it moves through. Its spatial nature can be affected by the way in which movement is marked by a secondary scale of planting, surface, elevational changes, light, and by a primary system of marking main connection "nodes" where more stationery places can be made for public facilities, ie. phonebooths, washrooms, resting spots, and for clear entrances and exits to the system from logical points in the surrounding city context.

The episodic nature of these connection points along the linear park's ribbon of movement presents an opportunity for the designer to reflect the changing nature of the park's context, or to give the linear park a beginning, middle and end.

The structure of the actual ribbon functions best when there is a clear separation made between different types of movement. For example, the separation of joggers, walkers, and bicycles can accommodate safe and more enjoyable movement for all three types of movement. users, ie. cycle paths have people riding for speed and people riding for leisure; accomodation should be made for both. Clearly, there should be a separation between the cycle path and the promenade, the jogging route in a clearly coded system.

The elaboration of the episodic nature of the natural ravine park should also be a conscious design goal, so that it too is marked with clear entrances, exits and places in regular connective "nodes". While essentially leaving the ravine park in its original state, the introduction of some structured connections can ultimately promote the use of the ravine system for a wider number of users.

The open space of the ravine can be clearly linked back to the city structure through a system of open space "types" such as can be found in Riverdale Park and Alexander Muir Park, where the transition from the city to the ravine is gradually introduced through constructed terraces, gardens and steps.

Facilities and Use: Intensity and Frequency

The primary use of the constructed linear path is of a pleasurable and leisurely movement that offers another level of intensity and frequency distinct from the high speeds of vehicles. The differences in speed of movement, and modes of movement should be understood and considered by designers. The programming of the episodic "nodes" can enhance the frequency and intensity of use, as can the strategic lay-out of the linear park through the city context, touching on other types of open space, public buildings and generally well populatd areas.

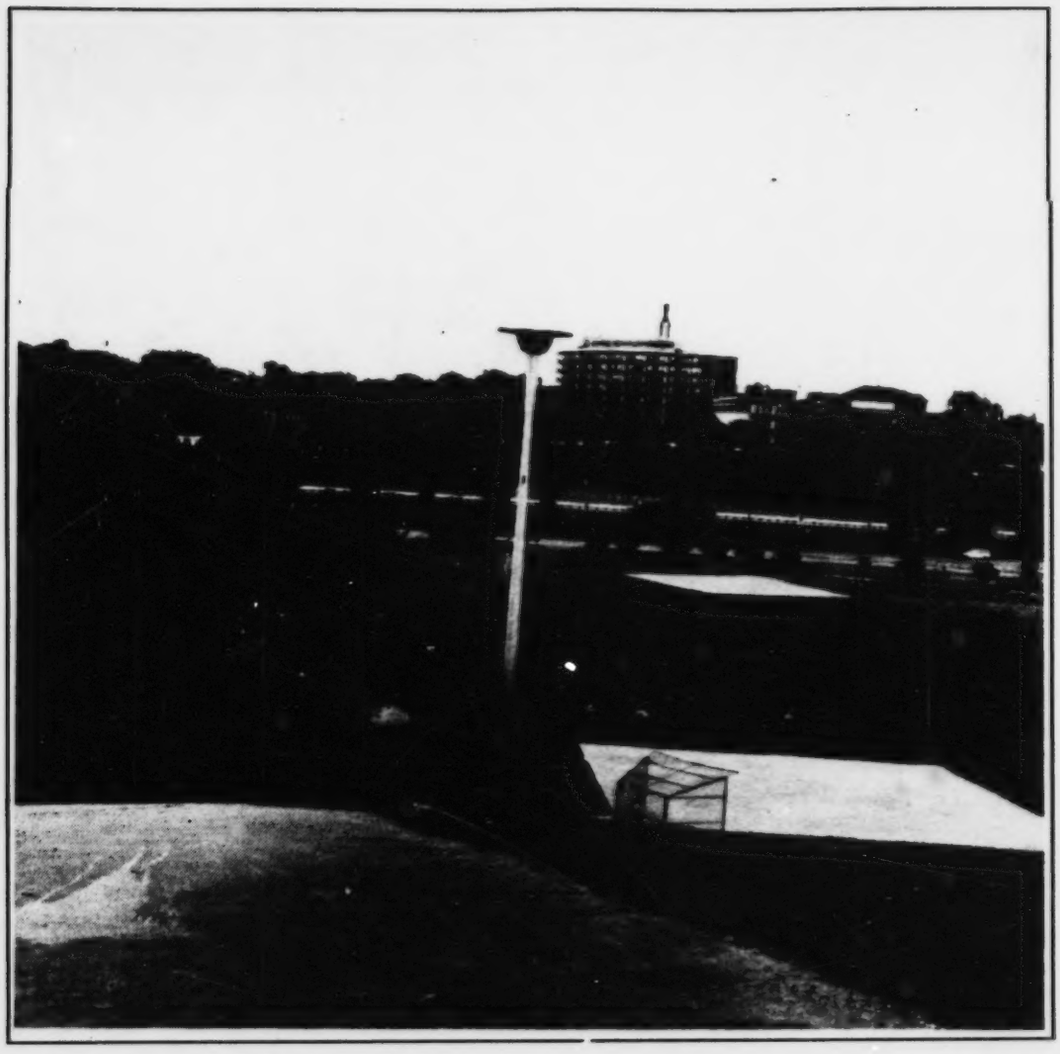
The ravine park by nature is isolated from the city structure by its elevational changes. This isolation should be countered with strong connections; the city-to-ravine open space transition can be extensively programmed to provide a certain amount of overlook and intensity for the ravine proper.

Scale

The scale of the linear park varies from its largest component, the ravine park, to its smallest component, the cycling path. Natural linear parks are fixed by their geographical features and can contract and expand to take in and embrace the city structure. The small scale of the constructed path offers a great flexibility and versatility of accommodation and adaptation that can develop into a highly elaborated system of movement through the city's structure.

System

The linear park is a valuable potential link that can bind together the downtown core's sometime disparate collection of open space. While the ravine and waterfront linear parks have a natural connective location that can be actively promoted to link the larger city park system, the constructed linear park, by virtue of its relatively narrow width, can be added into the existing city structure as new and conscious design of an open space "system".

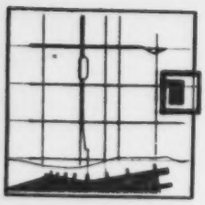


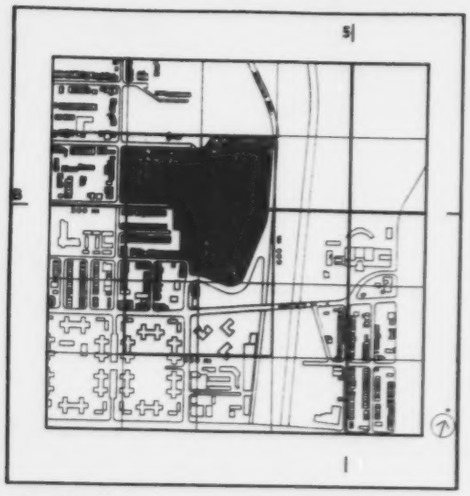
Riverdale Park

Ownership:	Public
Frontage:	190m
Depth:	450m
Area:	118,750sm
Form:	90% Soft Surface: lawn, trees 10% Hard Surface: paved walkways, asphalt drive
Edges:	North: Necropolis Cemetary South: Gerrard and Carlton Streets East: Bayview Avenue West: Sumach Street
Use:	casual (sitting, eating lunch) public promenade farm/petting zoo baseball playing fields entrance to Don Valley
System:	footbridge connection over Don River to Broadview Park part of Don Valley Ravine system

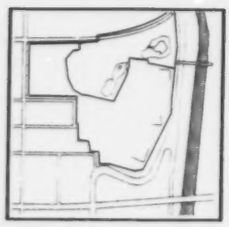
Riverdale Park

Linear Park

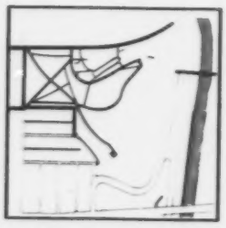




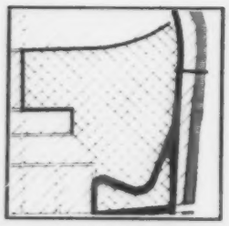
Context



Lot



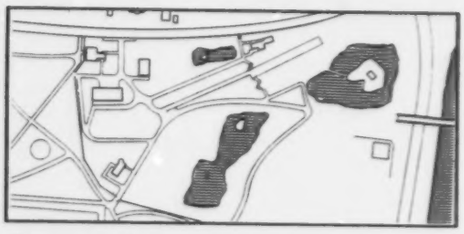
Movement



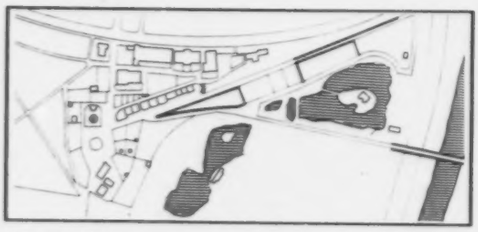
Public/Private

Present Use

Past Use



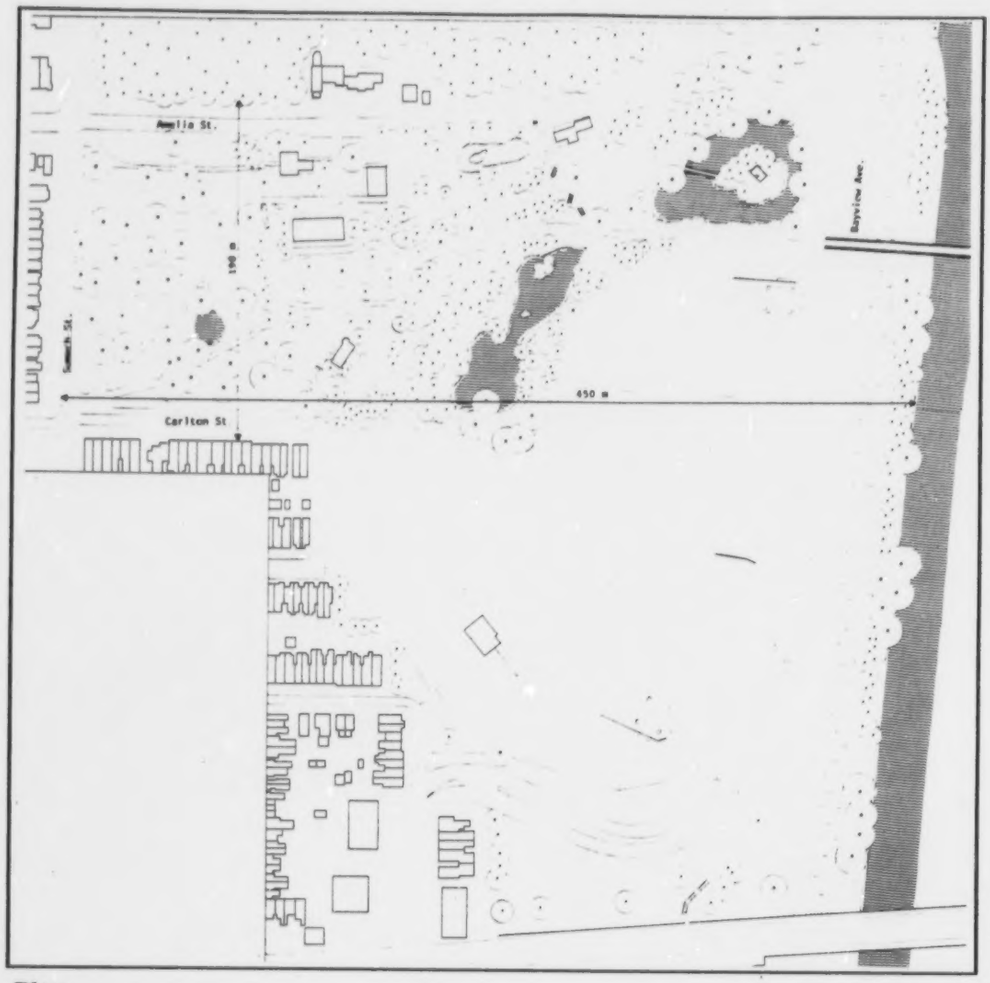
Present Plan



Past Plan

Riverdale Park, framed by the Gerrard Street bridge to the south, the Necropolis to the north and Bayview Avenue, Don Valley Expressway on its eastern edge starts with a typical city park on its western edge on Sumach Street. This level and horizontal space of the park forms the beginning of a series of paths and routes that eventually pass down the edges of the ravine into the larger valley of the Don.

The linear progression of open spaces passes through the recreational children's attraction, Riverdale Farm. The former Riverdale Zoo on the same site formally presented a route that continued from its boundary to the playing fields at the floor of the valley, and across a foot bridge over to the eastern side of the valley to Broadview Avenue. Presently Riverdale Farm does not continue this former progression but the same playing fields and footbridge exist and this route could be easily re-established.



Plan

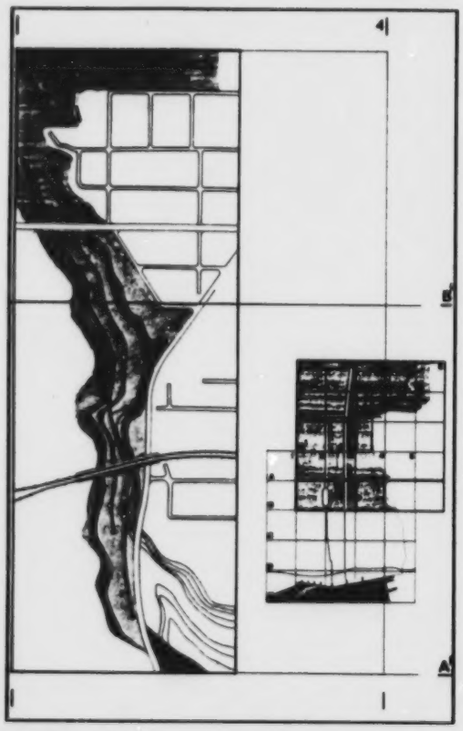
The park is structured by three sections: **the city park** at Sumach Street which is essentially a flat plane with conventional diagonal paths, wading pool, trees and lawn; **Riverdale Farm**,. which provides the change in level down the ravine edge but does not promote the connection to the valley; and the third section, **the sports field**, another level plane at the valley floor, with no landscaping or public support facilities.

The city park is undeveloped as a public space despite the numbers of people who pass through this well formed and well sited open space. Riverdale Farm contains an area of natural landscape and pond which is prohibited for public use. The sports field contains three baseball diamonds and a soccer field and is reached by way of Bayview Avenue at its base.

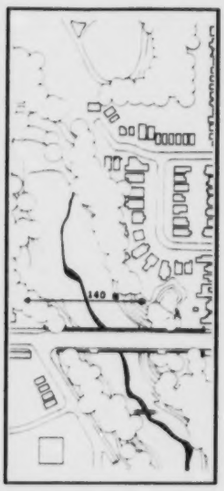
The overall integration of these three distinct section by a more recognizable linear system would serve to create a public and urbane connection to the Don Valley and allow Riverdale Park to act effectively as a "forecourt" to the larger valley.

Riverdale Park

Linear Park

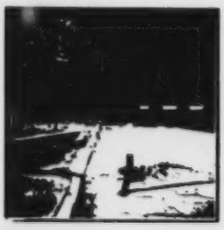


Context

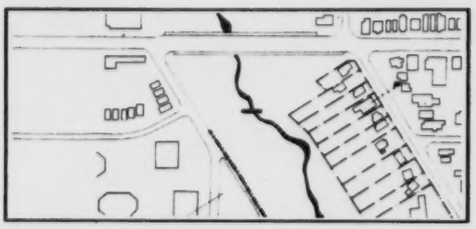


Site

Section



Use



Lot

Balfour Park, a smaller ravine branch extending out of the larger Don Valley, is punctuated by Mount Pleasant Road and St. Clair Avenue passing over top. Balfour Park terminates at Mount Pleasant Cemetary at the edge of Yonge Street. The detail strip of the ravine as it contacts St. Clair Avenue is typical of the many conditions along its length.

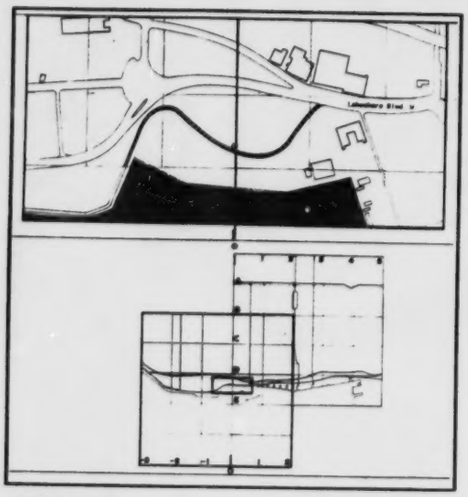
The bridges which act as a link between the city above and the valley below are the potential connections between the two systems. During the summer, the park environment becomes so overgrown and dense that the presence of the city above is indistinguishable. The backyards of the private homes flanking the ravine length are almost invisible to the users of the park, underlining a perceptual distance between the worlds of the ravine and the city.

Balfour Park

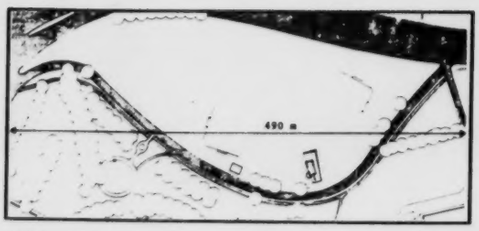
Ownership:	**Public**
Frontage:	**140m**
Length:	**1620m**
Area:	**226,800sm**
Form:	**95% Soft Surface: trees, meadow** **5% Hard Surface: paved walkways**
Edges:	**North: Mount Pleasant Cemetary** **South: Residential** **East: Mount Pleasant Road** **West: Residential**
Use:	**scenic promenade** **nature walk**
System:	**branch of the larger Don Valley ravine system**

Balfour Ravine

Linear Park



Context



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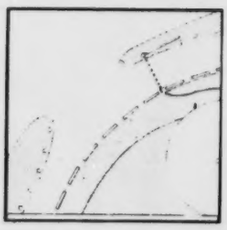


Detail Plans

Use

Movement

Public/Private

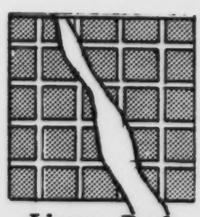
A linear cycling trail, presently running along the city's water's edge, passes through Coronation Park. This park is located to the east of the Princess Gates of the CNE and south of the Lakeshore Boulevard. It contains three baseball diamonds, a memorial of trees planted in a circular pattern, and pleasant shaded spaces with continuous views out to the lake. The linear open space passing through Coronation Park is a thin asphalt strip consisting of a bicycle and jogging route. This route is a compressed and intense movement system that separates the experience of moving through the surrounding landscapes of the city and nature from the more stationary and restful ambience of Coronation Park.

The economy of the space of the thin asphalt strip as "park" allows it to fit into tight spaces. It is an efficient and dynamic route, and easily understood as a system in which conflicting speeds are separated in a journey through a wide range of landscapes.

Coronation Park

Ownership:	**Public**	
Frontage:	**490m**	
Depth:	**270m**	
Area:	**97,400sm**	
Form:	**70% Soft Surface:**	**lawn, trees**
	30% Hard Surface:	**asphalt drive, paved bike and jogging track**
Edges:	**North:**	**Lakeshore Boulevard**
	South:	**Lake Ontario**
	East:	**Yacht Clubs**
	West:	**Princess Gate/CNE**
Use:	**lakefront promenade**	
	passage for bikes, joggers	
	baseball playing fields	
	picnics	
	memorial	
System:	**lake edge parks and Ontario Place to the west**	
	Harbourfront to the east	
	part of the Martin Goodman Trail	

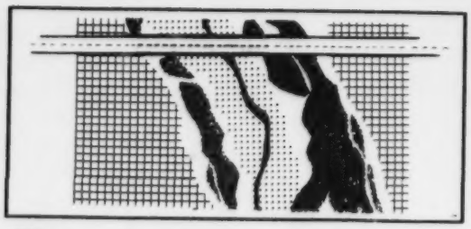
Coronation Park



Linear Park

Toronto

Balfour Park



Plan

View

Balfour Park, a smaller ravine branch extending out of the larger Don Valley, is punctuated by Mount Pleasant Road and St. Clair Avenue which pass over top. The Park terminates at Mount Pleasant Cemetary at the edge of Yonge Street. The detail strip of the ravine as it contacts St. Clair Avenue is typical of its many edge conditions. The bridges act as a link between the city above and the valley below and are potential connections between the two systems. During the summer, the park environment becomes so overgrown and dense that the presence of the city above is indistinguishable. The backyards of the private homes flanking the ravine length are almost invisible to the users of the park, underlining a perceptual distance between the worlds of the ravine and the city.

Toronto

Coronation Park

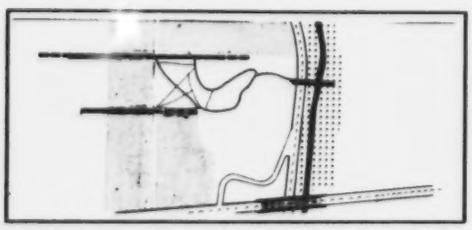
Plan

View

A linear water's edge cycling trail presently passes through **Coronation Park**, located east of the Princess Gates and south of Lakeshore Boulevard. It contains three baseball diamonds, a circular memorial of trees, and pleasant shaded spaces with views to the lake. The linear open space passing through the park is a thin asphalt strip consisting of a bicycle and jogging route. It is a compressed and dynamic system that separates the movement of the surrounding city landscape from the restful ambience of Coronation Park. The economy of the thin asphalt strip as a "park" space allows it to fit into tight spaces. It is an efficient and dynamic route, and easily understood as a system in which conflicting speeds are separated in a journey through a wide range of landscapes.

Toronto

Riverdale Park



Plan

View

Riverdale Park, framed by the Gerrard Street bridge to the south, the Necropolis to the north and Bayview Avenue, Don Valley Expressway on its eastern edge starts with a typical city park on its western edge on Sumach Street. This level and horizontal space of the park forms the beginning of a series of paths and routes that eventually pass down the edges of the ravine into the larger valley of the Don.

The linear progression of open spaces passes through the recreational children's attraction, Riverdale Farm. The former Riverdale Zoo on the same site formally presented a route that continued from its boundary to the playing fields at the floor of the valley, and across a foot bridge over to the eastern side of the valley to Broadview Avenue. Presently Riverdale Farm does not continue this former progression but the same playing fields and footbridge exist and this route could be easily re-established.

The Artek Pioneer Camp accomodates five areas over 4.5 kilometers along the southern shore of the Crimean Sea. These five sections were dictated by the relief of the land and by the natural ravines of the coastal zone, creating natural boundaries. They form the Palace of Pioneers, including an open air amphitheatre, and sites for campfires, forming the centre of culture and educational work.
A 100 meter wide sea-front park, complete with beaches, aquatic sports stations, and a small harbour, slope up to the terraces that connect the five sections of the camp. These parts, varied in design, contain study alleys, flower gardens, viewing sites and playgrounds, bonfire sites, fountains, and summer houses devoted to popular tales and fables. Pools and kiosks connect to the harbour and aquatic sports section.

Via Julia is a new central promenade in Barcelona, that runs between surrounding streets in an area of great civic importance. The site posed difficult level differences and access problems for the subway and street crossings.

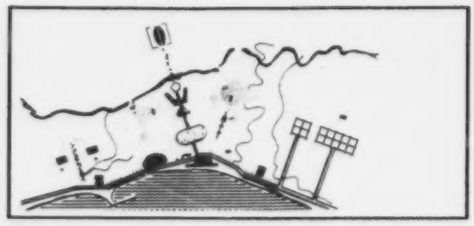
To address these conditions, a new central promenade was proposed and developed by the city planners that planted trees, green lawns, and strategically located pieces of sculpture right within the nerve centre of the boulevard. Entry to the subway was marked by open and covered structures that established access to the underground while at the same time created a covered sheltered place. This in turn extended the linear openness of the park as a place operating within a busy street.

Marne la Vallee, a new French town created in the mid 1970's, was the site for research into the planning and creation of public space. Antoine Grumbach and Christian de Portzamparc established a planning policy that favoured the town's public spaces as notable points of identity around which an urban structure would be organized.

The first of the two principal networks consisted of parks, gardens and existing features like river banks, ponds and waterside promenades. The second network was of a more urban kind, a system of supporting internal urban thoroughfares: private vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. These open space areas were created prior to the placing of buildings.

Consequently, streets, materials, ground relationship, and urban vegetation were considered in a policy in which public spaces such as parks and squares actively controlled the street in a reversal of traditional importance.

Russia

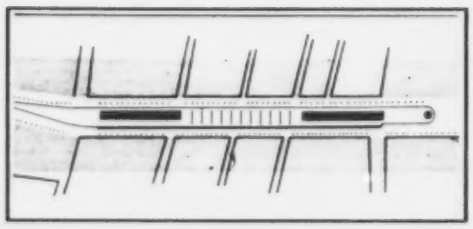


Plan

Greater Artek Project

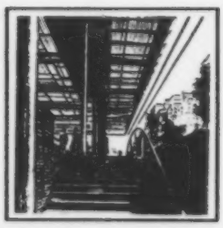
View

Barcelona



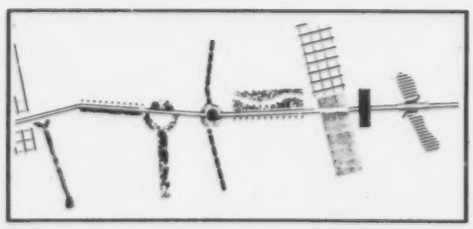
Plan

Via Julia



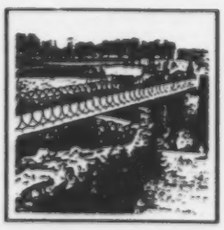
View

France



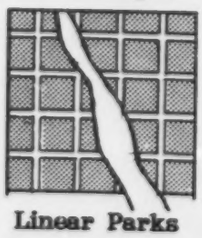
Plan

Marne La Vallee



View

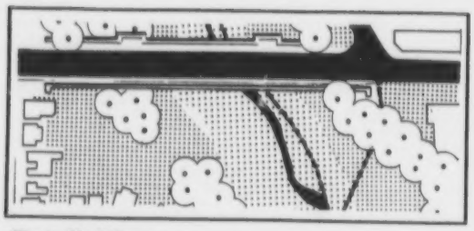
Comparative World Examples



Linear Parks

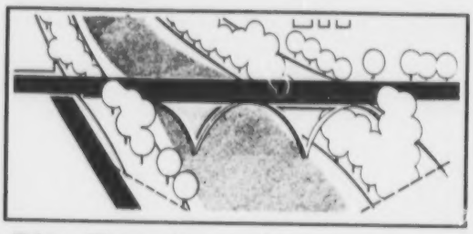
Toronto

Balfour Park



Detail Plan

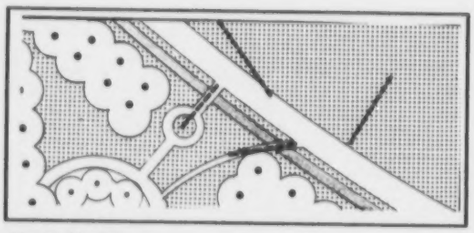
Detail Section



Edge Elements

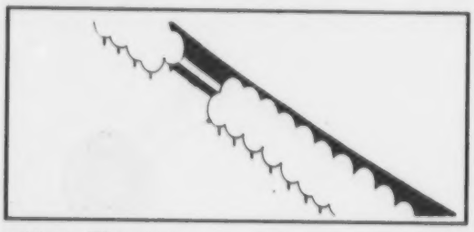
Internal Elements

Toronto



Detail Plan

Detail Section



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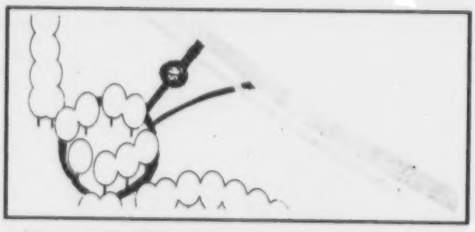
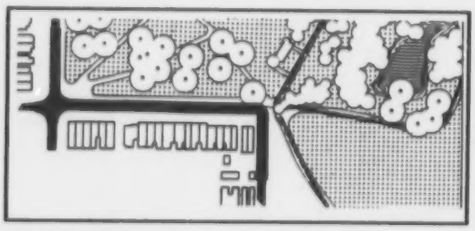


Internal Elements

Toronto

Riverdale Park



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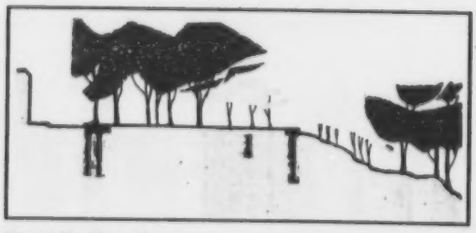

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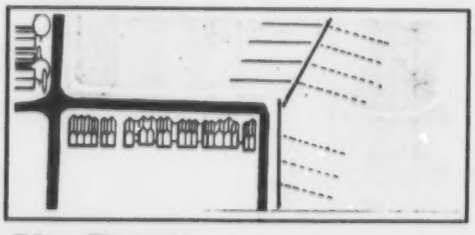

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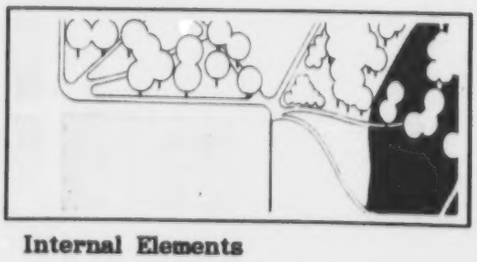
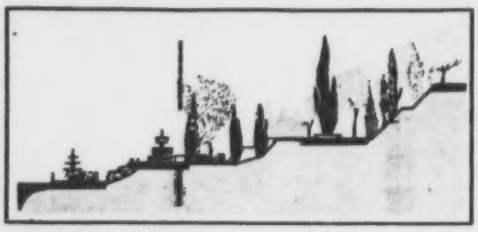


Internal Elements

Russia

Greater
Artek Project



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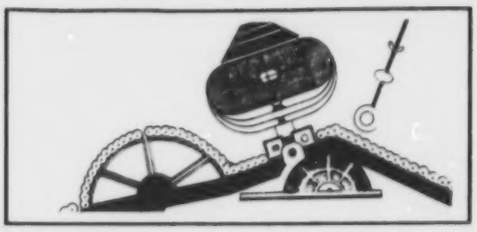

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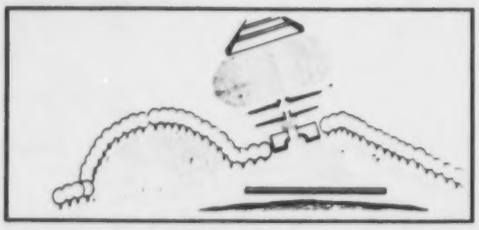

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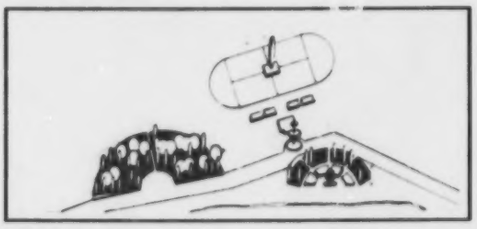
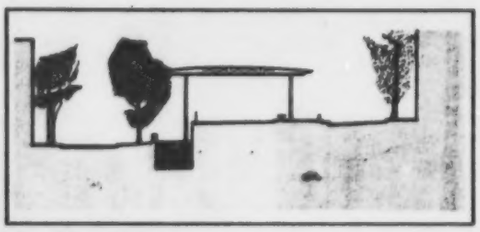


Edge Elements

Barcelona

Via Julia



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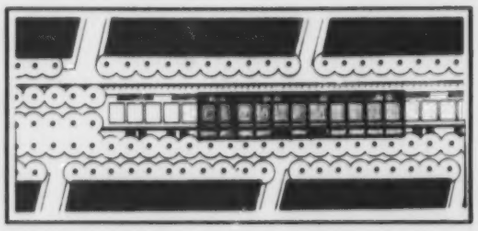

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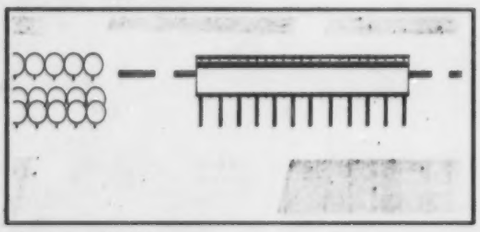

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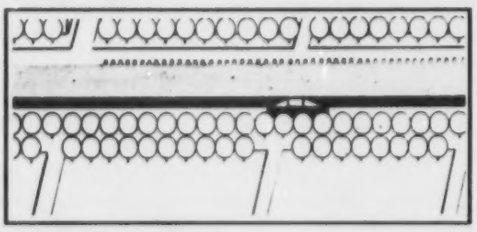
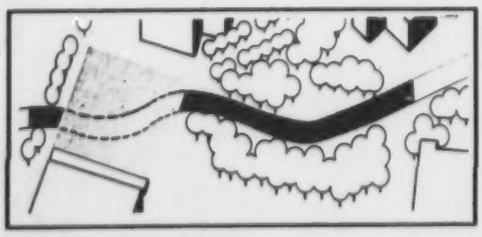


Edge Elements

France

Marne la Vallee

Detail Plan



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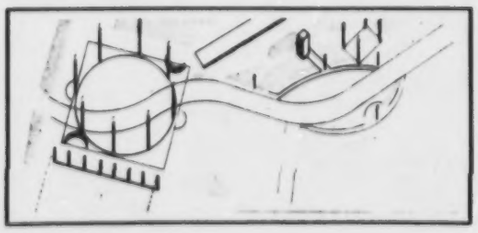
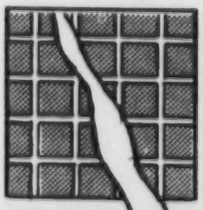


Edge Elements

Comparative
World Examples



Linear Parks

Observations and Comparisons

The linear park, considered in either its constructed condition or in its more natural ravine state, heightens the nature and experience of movement through this open space. Designers should consider solutions that offer multiple choices and kinds of experience beyond a single functional response. The experiences of a route, its sequence, and both its natural and man-made response to its changing contexts can be planned to provide choices to reflect a range of social interpretations and roles.

The experiences of walking or driving over the St. Clair bridge rising over the **Balfour Park ravine**, and of walking along the valley, are experiences of two different worlds of the city grid and the city's ravines, both with unique and separate characteristics. These two realms in their present state have remained for the most part separate and not comprehensible as a continuous system of public space.

Riverdale Park, containing the children's farm (once the city zoo) a children's farm), forms a sequence of movement and places that connect the city street to the natural qualities of the valley. At the top of the old zoo site, the original planning of the park creates a formal, more traditional open space with seating, fountains and walkways that one moves through to approach the Riverdale Farm. The formal paths then become more informal with routes moving down the ravine slope, through the farm exhibits, down to the baseball diamonds at the valley floor, to the pedestrian bridge that crosses the river and expressway over to the eastern side of the valley up to Broadview Avenue.

While **Balfour Park** is a natural linear system, its connections and links to the surrounding streets at the points of entry are undeveloped. In his planning for the **Greater Artek Project** proposal, Leonidov, on the other hand, exploits the natural landscape features of a different ravine in an varied range of responses. Running along the shore of the Crimea, the five sections of camp are different in form and identity, while their functional programmes are essentially identical. The terraced camp areas of the symmetrically placed camp buildings are connected by a central axis, a broad path, that connects them with the beaches below. The linear park that runs along the edge of the Crimea coast is punctuated by the set of the five camp complexes, connecting into the linear system by the terraces running up and down the slopes of the site. The linear park itself consists of a further division of parallel systems, punctuated by fountains, viewing areas, gardens, playgrounds, and summer houses.

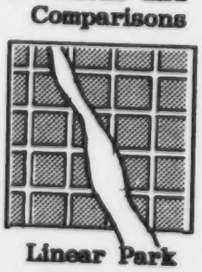
The bicycle path running through Coronation Park, by contrast, is neutral, and unlike the Artek linear park in which the strip is concentrated with programmes and parallel systems, depends on the adjacent context to provide the "movement experience".

Along the length of the **Marne la Vallee** linear system are located a number of public spaces at intersections, crossings and edges. The public spaces have been sited as places for sitting, meeting and for future development of programmed public space.

The linear paths moving through both **Balfour Park and Riverdale Park** are planned as essentially neutral movement through the spaces of the park and the ravine. The future development of these paths could be designed to enhance the experience of the ravine and the park by establishing a hierarchy of nodes that could become locations for complementing public facilities. Access points between the city and the ravine could form part of a sequence of connections.

The **Via Julia** example, as a discontinuous strip, is inserted as a graft within a condition congested by heavy traffic. The design of this open space has created a contrast of openness to its very tight urban situation. It is alternately open and built; the edges are elaborated along its length as well as its termini, punctuating these with works of art and signalling the boundary of a neighbourhood.

In Toronto, the lack of a strong continuous route on the cycling paths and ravine sites, together with the lack of a corresponding network of conditions, nodes and specific places along its edges, has resulted in a corresponding lack of clear public connections between the city and the ravine. Consequently these neutral conditions have given rise to an increasing concern for a lack of legibility of routes which has been identified by many citizens' groups as instrumental to public safety. The Via Julia example demonstrates that built form can in fact enhance the nature of the linear park rather than hamper its openness.



Observations and Principles

1. Place Creation and Modification

1.A Natural Ravine Parks

- Ravine parks are formed by natural topographical features that are unique to the city. These have become an important natural resource. In Toronto, the ravines are part of larger systems of branches into the Don and Humber Valleys.

- Limits to the ravine parks are made by their natural boundaries. These can be linked into a legible progression of spaces starting from the city fabric and passing into the open space of the ravine.

1.B Constructed Linear Parks

- the artificial linear park should have clearly defined edges along its length to establish its presence in the changing city context.

- its width can permit several modes of movement through it, ie. cycling, pedestrians, joggers, etc.

- it has the potential to present supplementary pedestrian routes through the city, as highly public systems with good visual, and physical connections to conventional public systems of movement. (cars, public transit, normal pedestrian street traffic)

2. Place Definition

2.A Natural Ravine Park

- A repeating system of links and connections from the normal city fabric should be developed along the length of the natural ravines. These links could take the form of more urban types of open space, like small urban places, urban parks and gardens that act as a transition between a more cultivated landscape and the more natural one of the ravine.

2.B Constructed Linear Parks

- A repeating system of links should be developed along the length of the artificial linear park that will connect to the varying city context and also express its continuous nature.

3. Place of Possibilities :
Space in Relationship to objects, to each other and to a whole

3.A Natural Ravine Park

- Continuous views through ravine parks are not usually possible because of the dense foliage. Short range, linked, and constructed views that create points of reference should be considered by designers in planning access points to the ravine system.

- The points of access and of reference mark distance, heights and can identify other smaller urban places that link directly to the city structure.

- The internal structure of the ravine itself can use "looping" networks of movement that allow pedestrians and cyclists to circle back to their starting point but by a varying route for using both backs of a stream's course.

3.B Constructed Linear Parks

- The design of the constructed linear parks should both establish a long continuous system, and also promote spontaneous use of shorter stretches of the park.

- The elaboration of small places can be developed at water's edges, crossings and intersections, undersides of bridges, and axial views to interesting city landmarks, etc.

- Specific functions, such as higher speed jogging or cycling routes, can be indicated by changes in surface and edge conditions.

Urban Parks

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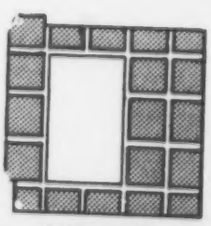
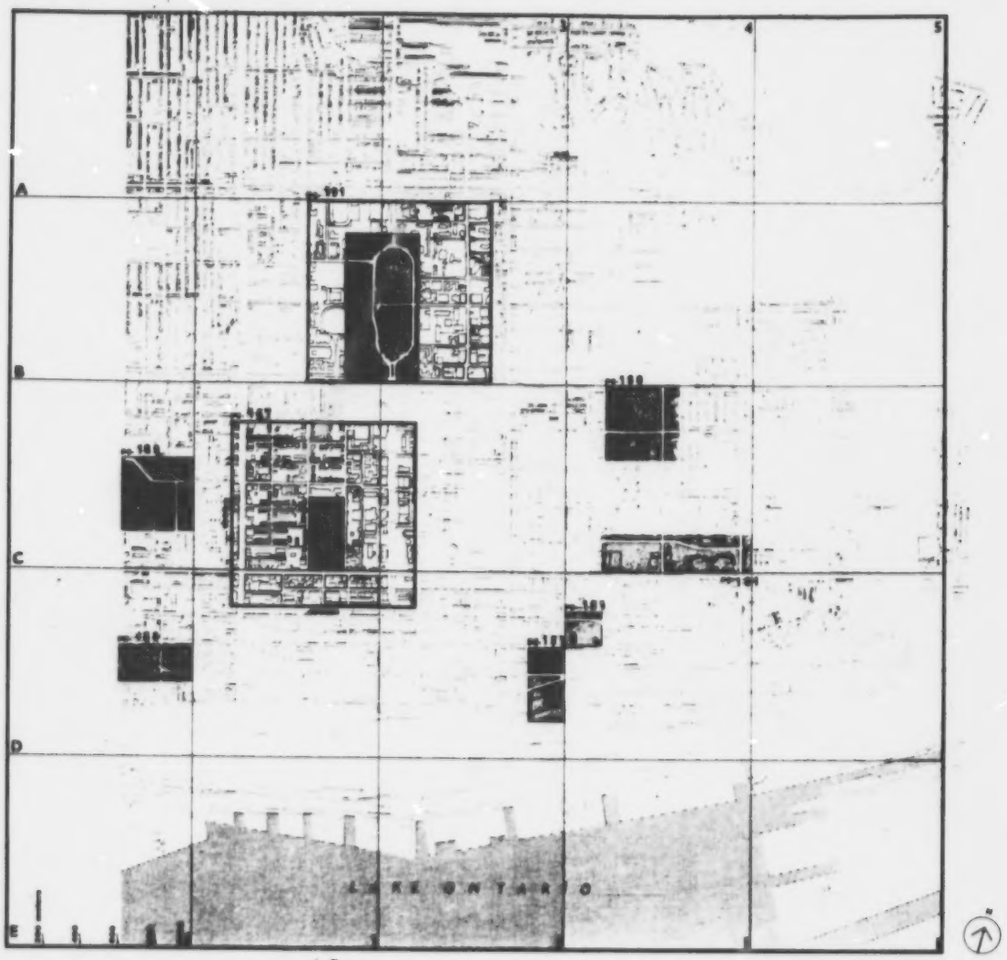
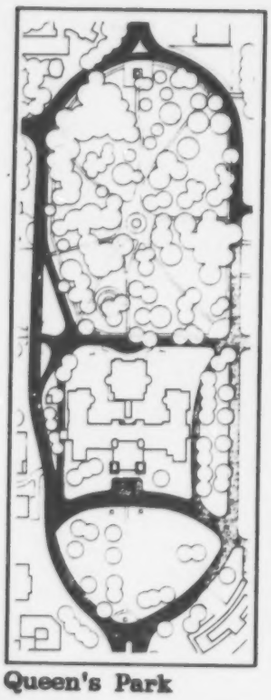




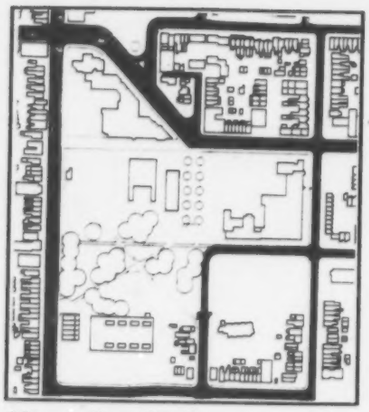
URBAN PARKS **M A P P I N G**

Urban Park

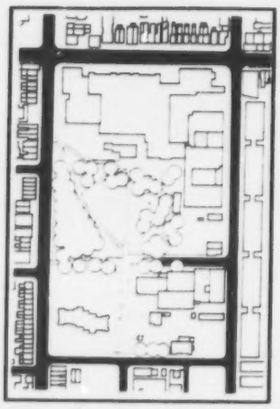
Definition	A large public open space that occupies an area of at least one city block.
Location	Found around natural features, ie. the ravine, creek; often forms a boundary to several distinct neighbourhoods.
Size	The largest open space in the downtown core; it normally occupies an minimum equivalent area of four city blocks.
Edge	Principal edges are made by streets with some secondary edges facing buildings. Edges should be open and publicly accessible.
Landscape	A balance between paved areas and natural settings to promote regular and urban uses. The natural setting and landforms should be enhanced but not at the expense of having unsafe isolated areas.
Use	Casual use, passing through, secondary pedestrian routes, recreational sports, community centres, festivals, playground, pools
Weather	Areas of shelter and shade should be provided around activities.
System	The urban parks can be linked together through the creek systems by smaller compoenents, ie. linear park, lot parks, forecourts, etc.
Other	Provide phone booths, legible access to public routes to public streets; provide high levels of lighting.



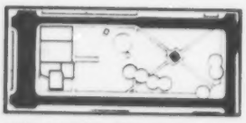
Queen's Park



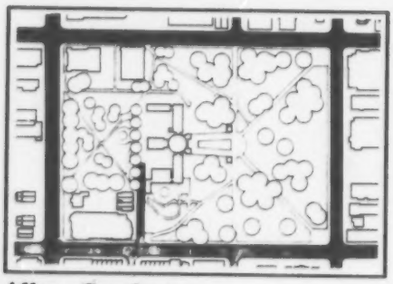
Alexandra Park



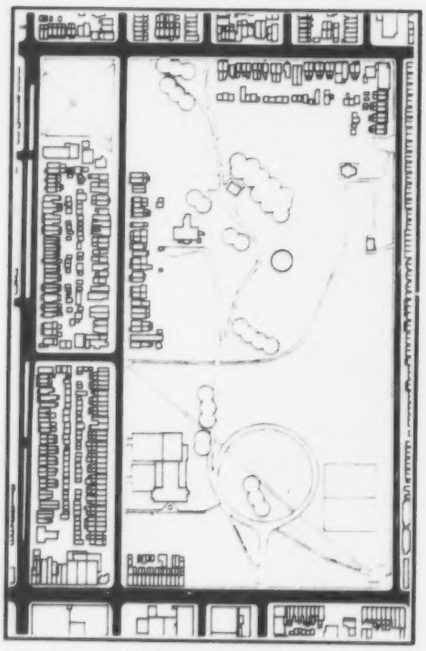
The Grange Park



Victoria Square



Allen Gardens

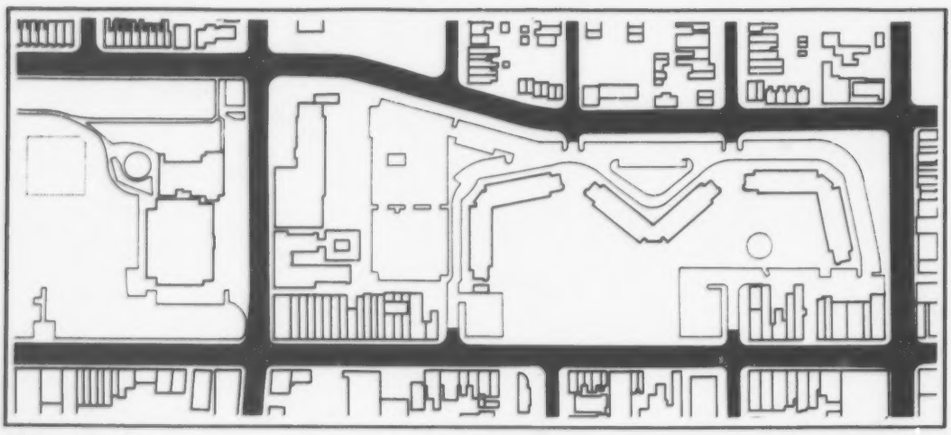


Trinity-Bellwoods Park

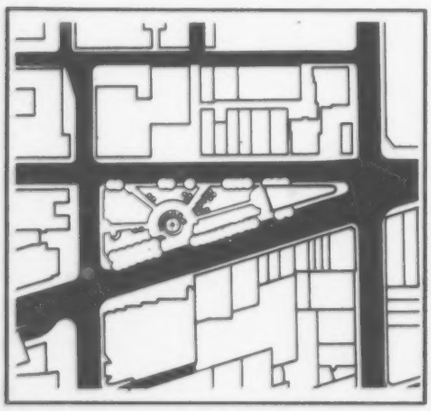
Definition

The urban park is an open space that occupies an area of at least one city block. The limits of the urban park are set by the normal orthogonal city grid of streets and lot divisions. In Toronto, the origins of its urban parks are often found to be donations of tracts of lands that once belonged to private landowners or to public institutions. These tracts are generally reduced versions of the original because of the later intensification of the street grid patter for residential developments.

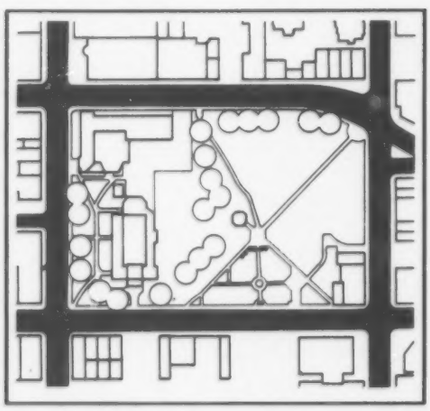
The urban park is often superimposed on existing natural sites, like the small ravines or the track of creeks now buried that have been rationalized into the regular Toronto street pattern. The urban park also often serves as a type of "forecourt" to larger natural features, such as the Don Valley, major ravine systems, and the waterfront.



Moss Park



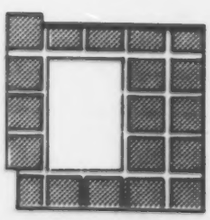
Berczy Park



St. James Park

The urban park is a public open space that forms the site for a full range of public activities and events. The scale of the urban park permits permanent built facilities that can lend stability and act as anchors for the security of the public and for the urban park programmes. Built facilities can include washroom buildings, performance pavilions, swimming pools, change rooms, shelters, community centres, and associated parks staff support.

The urban park in Toronto is predominantly landscaped with grass and trees. It is used in an everyday casual manner by the entire range of the city's residents. This wide range of use can be considered by the designer in providing a more balanced approach between paved, urbane spaces, planted promenade spaces and specifically focused recreational facilities. The conception of the urban park can include a number of "ideals" so that the open space satisfies the needs of its many users, both those groups that use the open space for specific functions, and those that experience the park simply by passing through.



Urban Park

Adjacencies, Edges

The principal edges of the urban park are made by streets, with secondary limits made by built form of privately owned properties or by the backyards of residential neighbourhoods. Special conditions also exist where the urban park faces larger types of open space formed by natural systems such as Lake Ontario, the Don Valley, and the ravine systems.

The edges made by streets have generally full access along the length of the open space. These edges present an opportunity for the designer to establish connections to adjacent uses and other smaller types of open space, like private or public forecourts, landscaped setbacks, passages to courtyards, public squares and sidewalks.

Public open space is a constant of the city pattern. The nature of the open space can determine the present and future character of its built edges. The open space should not be seen as a reflection of the buildings around it, but rather that the buildings will eventually change to reflect the status of the open space. Accordingly, the urban park can be seen as a strong catalyst for the improvement and intensification of the buildings around it, promoting urbane uses and urbane architecture.

The secondary edges that face private backyards should be distinctly made by designers to avoid ambiguity between public and private spaces. Too often, a "demilitarized zone" of a considerable width occurs where the ambiguity of the limit discourages anyone from using that zone. In the case of the neighbouring backyards, a distinct boundary can be made an integral part of the structure of the park, which can than be softened by a secondary system of low-key and simple means to signal a border to the space, like low sitting height walls, a change in elevation or planting borders.

Many urban parks border onto special conditions like ravines or waterfronts. In these cases the design of the urban park can connect the city to its natural features as in Alexander Muir Park, Cherry Beach, Kew Gardens and Riverdale Park.

Facilities and Use: Intensity and Frequency

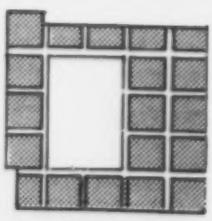
The urban park serves its neighbourhood. Many urban parks form a limit to several neighbourhoods, and because of that condition, serve as a convergence of different types of neighbourhoods representing a very wide and complex range of needs, uses and conflicts of use.

The **Grange Park**, for example, forms edges to the fashionable and popular Queen Street West business district to its south; to its north it faces the institutional forms of the Art Gallery of Ontario; to its west, a large, dense and ethnically mixed neighbourhood, and the intense strip of Dundas Street known as "Chinatown". On its east side it faces intense use by the Ontario College of Art student population and the residents of "Grange".

The wide diversity in the surrounding neighbourhoods represents many differences in terms of sorts of uses and users, the daily cycle of use, the week/weekend cycle, their intensity and non-intensity of use, and the appropriation of space for special single uses. At the same time, all of these factors are changing at the same speed with which city neighbourhoods change.

The designers of the urban park can accommodate many specific and non-specific uses described in an integrated and balanced manner that will not limit the flexibility of the open space to respond to the range of differences and their constant frequency of change.

Planners who are creating programming for urban parks should include both active and passive uses. The passive enjoyment of the open space is of a highly individual yet general nature. Designs and programmes can reflect a balance between specific recreational activities and non-directed use.



Spatial Structure: Surface, Form and Vegetation

Parks incorporate layers of technical functions: lighting, paving, drainage, vegetation and maintenance. The complexity and range and flux of programming inherent in the urban park must be integrated with these functions.

The spatial structure encompasses:

the formal qualities of the open space

the extension and elaboration of edges

accommodation of varied degrees of use and the flux of programming

Its surfaces signify behaviour:

hard surfaces suggest public gathering, and public use

green surfaces suggest more individual informal use

the design of the urban park as a public open space must use an integrated selection of elements such as vegetation, surface treatment, lighting and built form to promote an intensity of use

Safety in urban parks must be an integrated consideration in their design. Safety is not simply a lighting requirement. The same aspects of pleasurable urban parks can also be described as **safety measures** such as:

different levels of lighting, lighting space and objects, not lines

legibility of movement to entrances and exits

choices in movement;
(several way to enter or leave, ie. no dead ends)

views, overlook, elimination of isolated blind areas

Each urban park carries a particular character in terms of its origins, context and situation. The design of urban parks can follow a set of general principles but should be a site specific response to each open space.

Buildings: Intensity and Frequency of Use and Safe Places

The scale of the urban park can also accommodate built facilities to lend anchors and stability for the cycles of programmes. Built forms such as community centres, booths, daycares, and washrooms are building types that are small enough to act as pavilions in nature; they can enhance and mark the space of the urban park without threatening its openness.

Buildings also can furnish a setting for both day and night use, and provide a potential for **safe zones** for telephone booths, first aid, and supervisors, etc.

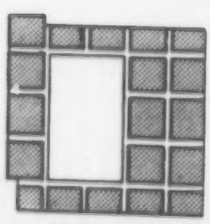
Coincidentally the positive attributes of intensity and frequency of use and of built facilities are also ways to provide safer parks. The lone occupant is seen in the romantic view as "communing with nature", but in another light the user is seen as isolated and vulnerable.

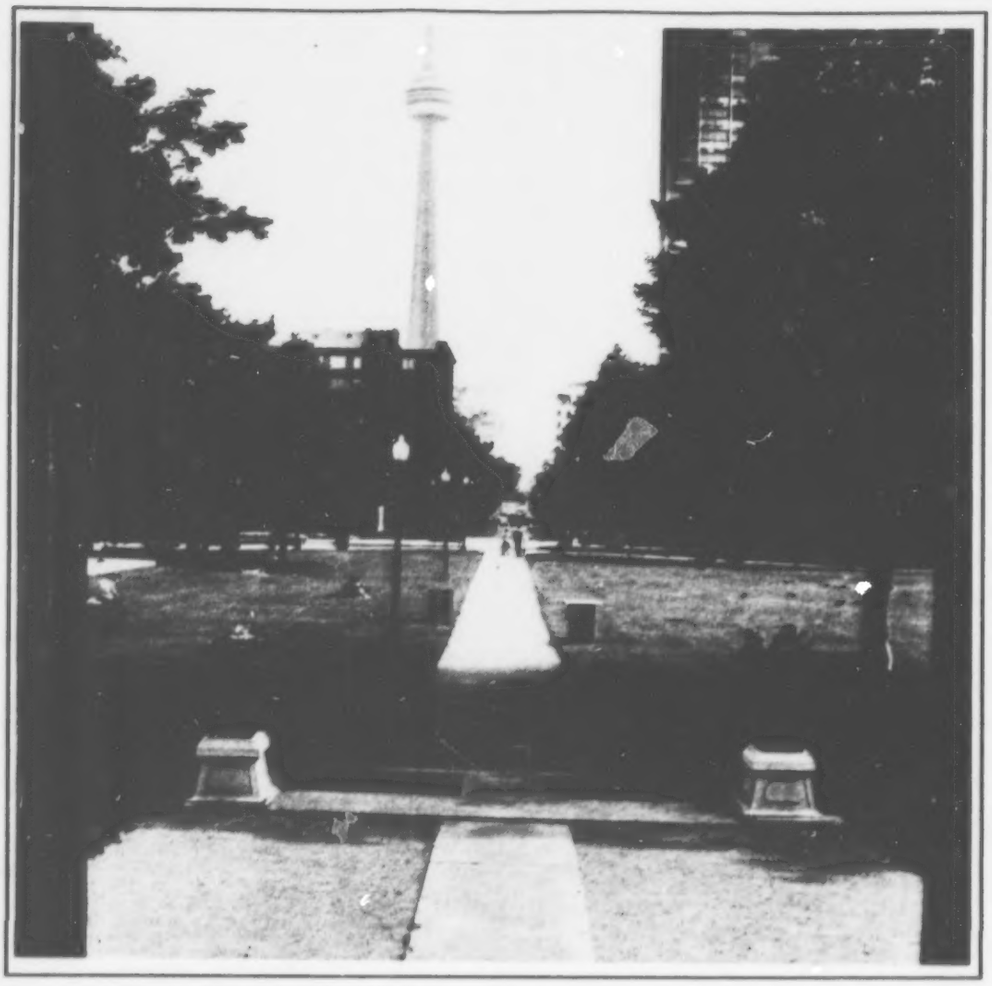
Scale

With the metropolitan parks located on the limits of the city, the urban park constitutes the largest in size of the open space types that are situated within the downtown core. The quality of the design and planning of the urban parks has a significant effect on the public's image of a system of open spaces in the downtown area.

System

In many cases, the urban park appears as a natural tracing of the water courses and ravines that travel through the rationalized Toronto grid. These systems are often only perceived at an abstract "mapping" layer, but the connection of the urban parks through use of a hybrid system of open space such as pocket parks, forecourts and linear parks could render these systems as a real and natural counterpoint to the city structure.





Ownership: Public

Frontage: 22m

Depth: 210m

Area: 17,938sm

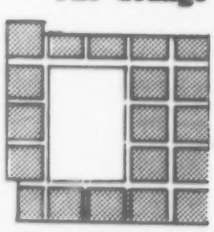
Form:
70% Soft Surface: trees, lawn, flower beds
30% Hard Surface: paved walkways

Edges:
North: Art Gallery of Ontario, "The Grange"
South: Stephanie Street, residential tower
axial connection to John Street
East: Ontario College of Art, Community Centre, St. George's Church
West: Beverly Street

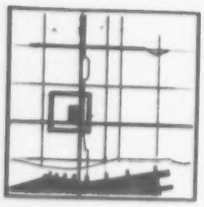
Use:
passage through block
recreation, tai chi, public park programming
public promenade
casual (eating lunch, sitting)
children's playground

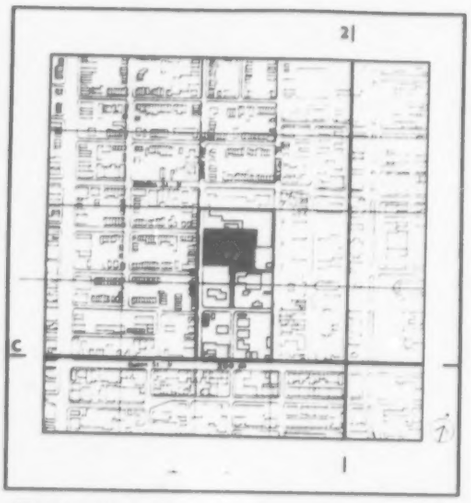
System: axial connection between John Street and "The Grange"

The Grange



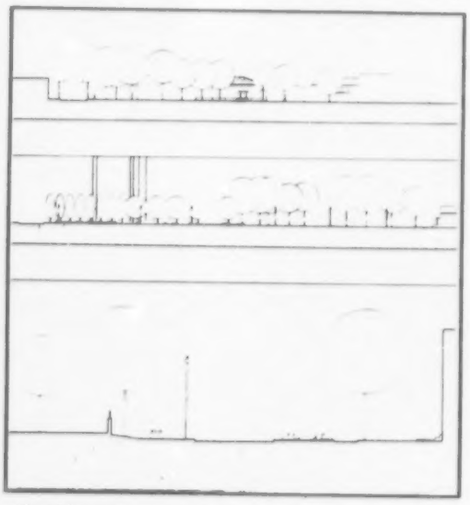
City Park



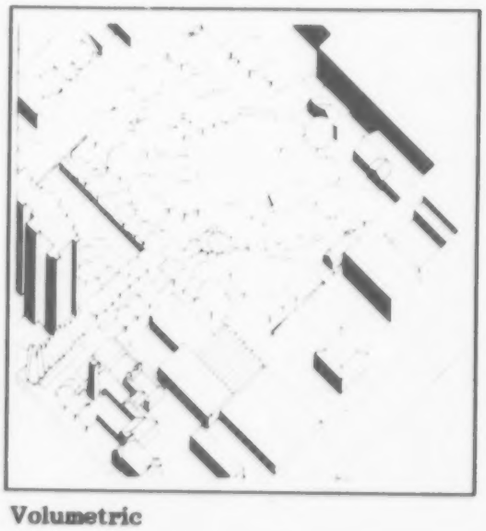


Context

Site



Sections

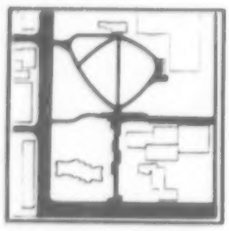


Volumetric

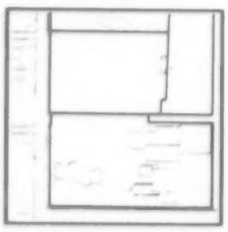
The Grange Park shares a large city block with the Art Gallery of Ontario to the north; an apartment building, community centre, and St. George's church to the south; and the Ontario College of Art on the east. The streets surrounding the larger block border onto many diverse areas: fashionable Queen Street, Chinatown, and the residential neighbourhoods to the west and east.

The west face is open onto Beverly Street. A low fence runs along this edge with two access points that go onto asphalt paths that then cross the park. A former section of John Street, now developed solely for pedestrians is on axis with the original mansion "The Grange". This avenue is lined by benches, trees and lights and marked by different paving, and serves to integrate the apartment building, church and community centre into the fabric of the open space and its approach. The buildings give a sense of stability and security to the areas of the park around them.

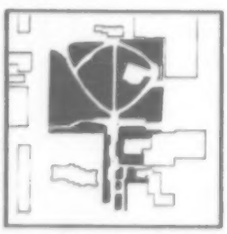
Use



Movement



Lot



Public/Private

Plan

A dead end street which serves the community centre also penetrates into the park and acts as the third major access point.

The park is planted with trees on a grass lawn. A children's play area is located close to the community centre.

Because the park is frequently used by a wide range of people, how this park is used and by who has been the subject of several independent studies and surveys to arrive at suggestions for possible programming of the park and for making the park enjoyable for all users. The nature of its use changes through its day/night cycle and week/weekend cycle.

Ownership: Public

Frontage: 200m

Depth: 610m

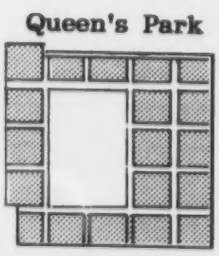
Area: 90,628sm

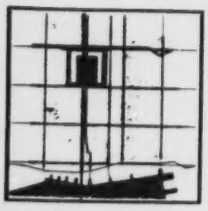
Form:
70% Soft Surface: trees, lawn, flower beds
30% Hard Surface: paved walkways

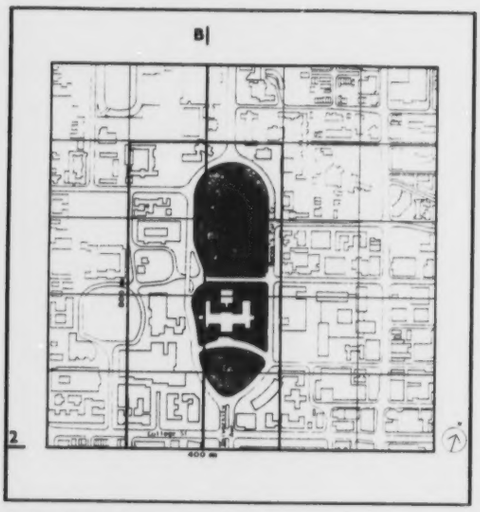
Edges: encircled by Queen's Park Crescent on three sides
- North: Queen's Park Crescent
  axial connection to Avenue Road
- South: Wellesley Street
  facing building - Ontario Legislature Building
- East: Queen's Park Crescent
  facing buildings - Provincial Government Buildings
- West: Queen's Park Crescent
  facing buildings - University of Toronto Buildings

Use:
cross-route
casual (eating lunch, sitting)
jogging
ceremonial
public gathering/demonstration

System: series of open spaces within and adjacent to the University of Toronto property
axial connection to University Avenue and Avenue Road

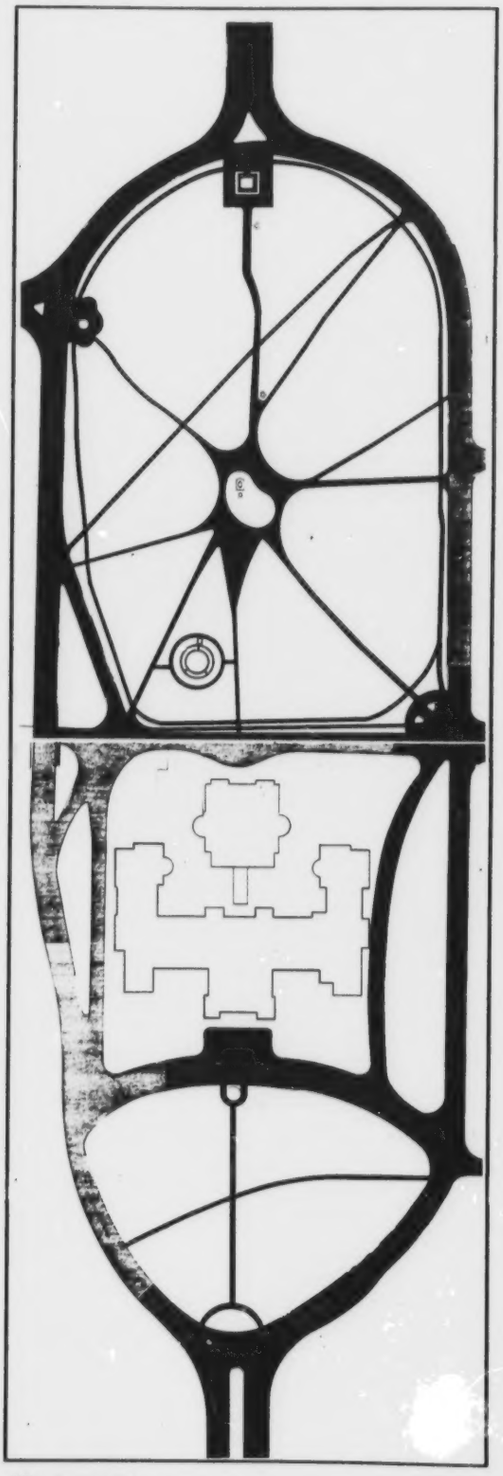




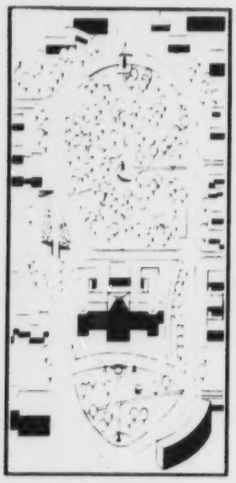


Context

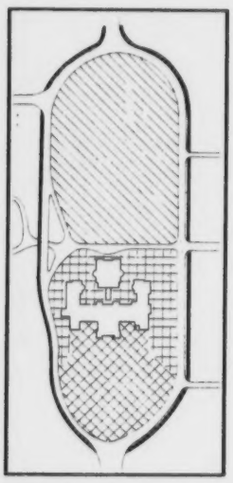
Past Use



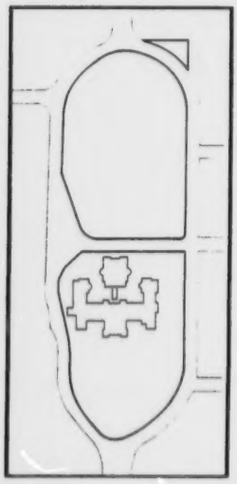
Movement



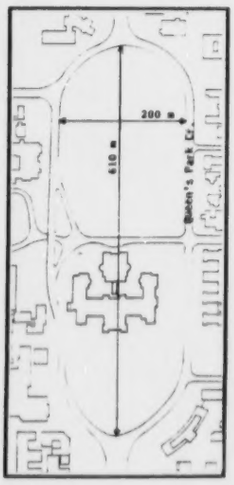
Volumetric



Public/Private



Site

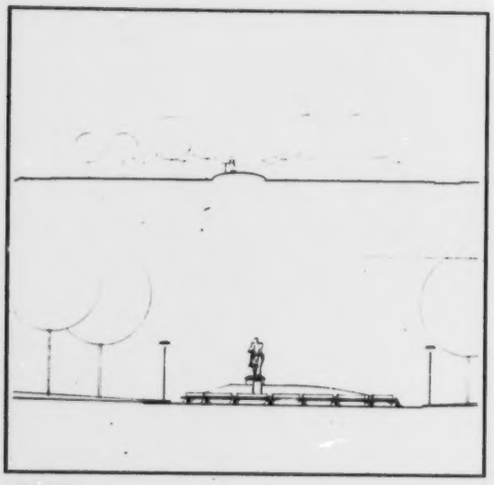


Size

Past Use

Use

Use



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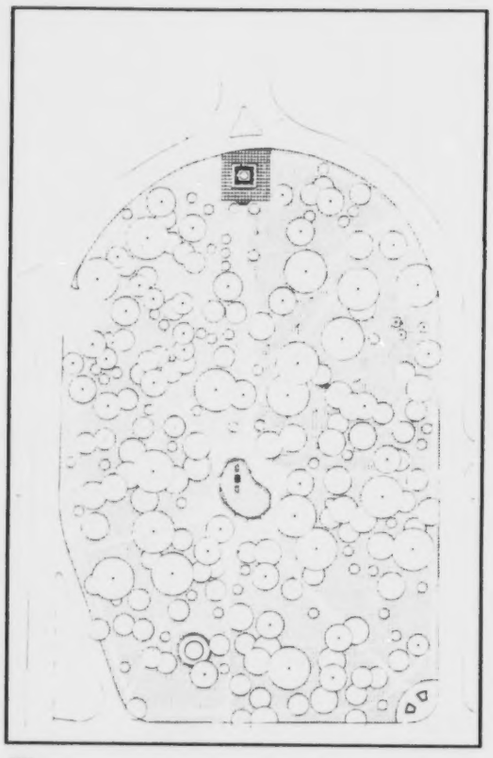


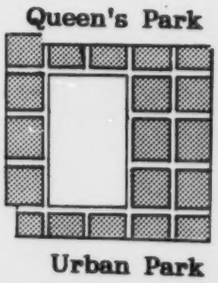
Plan

Queen's Park is a much reduced version of a far larger tract of land that took in the grounds of University College and earlier university buildings. This land originally stretched from College Street up to Bloor Street and from St. George Street to its present eastern limit. It then contained a picturesque route among the buildings and along a pond and creek. The original 186 acres of open space has been shrunken and encapsulated by a elliptically shaped traffic artery.

Today, the Ontario Legislative Building, designed by R.A. Waite, is situated in the centre of the elliptical park. The Legislative Building is the principal focus of University Avenue to the south. The south portion of the land facing University Avenue acts as an enlarged forecourt to the government building. The northern part of the land, "Queen's Park", has several monuments, artwork and floral arrangements with a circuit of crossing paths among the continuous lawn and diverse planting of trees.

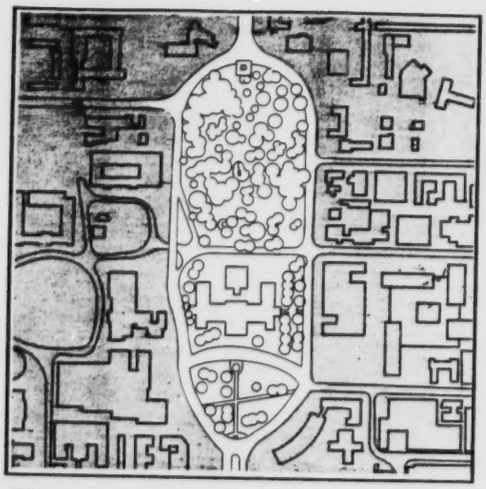
The site of Queen's Park plays a symbolic role as the focus of public demonstrations and civic events, with annual celebrations and parades associated with its space. (Caribana, Santa Claus parade, etc.) The planning of the park works for large events such as these, but the casual everyday use is hampered by inaccessibility at its edges because of the traffic circle, and by a lack of variety in its interior structure.

Queen's Park



Toronto

Queen's Park



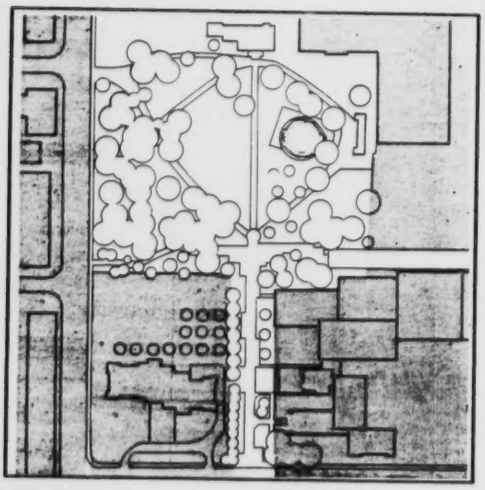
Plan

View

Queen's Park, with its resident Ontario Legislative Building, is the principal focus of University Avenue. The Legislative Building is situated in the centre of an elliptically shaped park with an encircling Queen's Park Crescent.

Toronto

The Grange



Plan

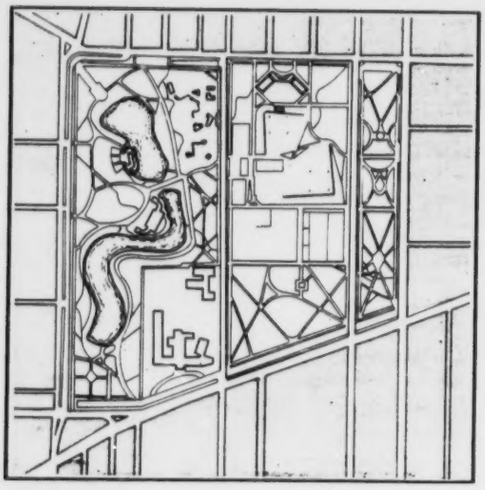
View

The Grange Park, located on the grounds of the Art Gallery of Ontario was originally the residence of D'Arcy Boulton which faced south onto the grounds. The house features a stone porch and a commanding view south along the axis of John Street.

Montreal

Parc

La Fontaine



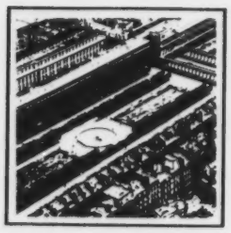
Plan

View

View

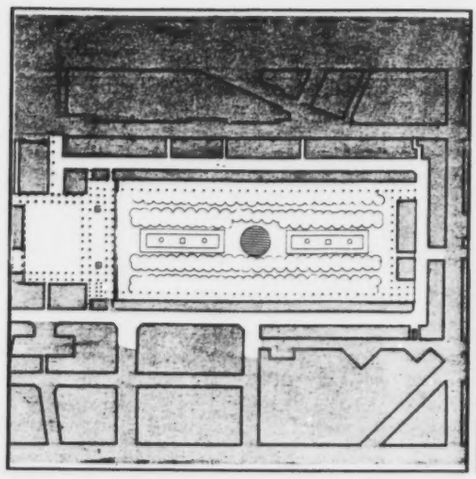
Located to the east of Mount Royal, Parc la Fontaine, Montreal's version of Olmstead's Central Park, is a rectangular shaped park with an angled south end along Sherbrooke Street. The park is divided into three distinct sections traversed by through streets.

Paris



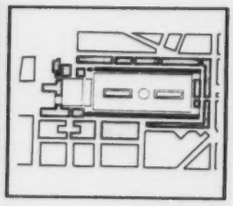
View

Palais Royale, formerly the Palais-Cardinal, located on the Rue St-Honore, was the home of Louis XIV. As a private residence and aristocratic quarters it contains a regular garden enclosed within the walls of the surrounding buildings.



Plan

Palais Royale

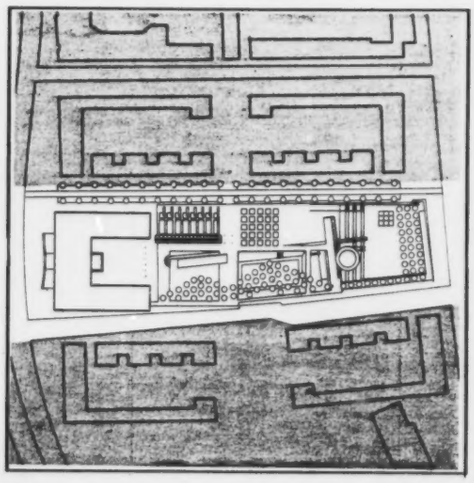


Site Plan

Berlin

View

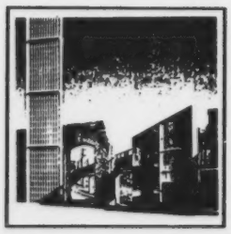
The Parc del Clot, located in a tightly built residential sector on the outskirts of Barcelona, is on the site of a previous railway installation, in which fragments, along with the perimeter walls, were left intact, along with a large open surface area. The park builds on the previous deposits and contains sculpture, water and soft lawns.



Plan

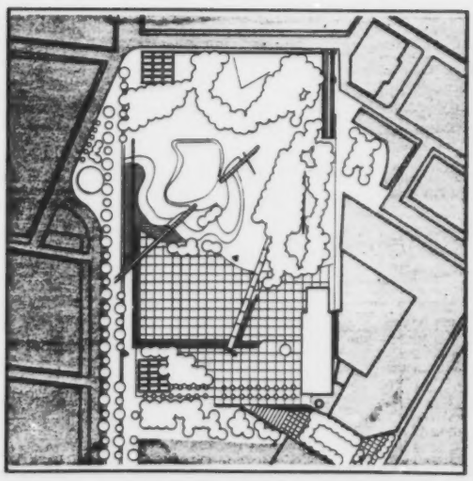
Museum Park

Barcelona



View

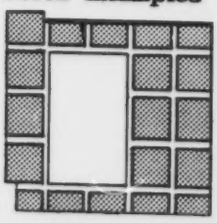
The open space adjacent to the Berlin Museum is the result of an international design competition won by Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska, restating the traditional baroque garden of the "nobleman's house". The site is located on a long narrow block with an existing museum.



Plan

Parc del Clot

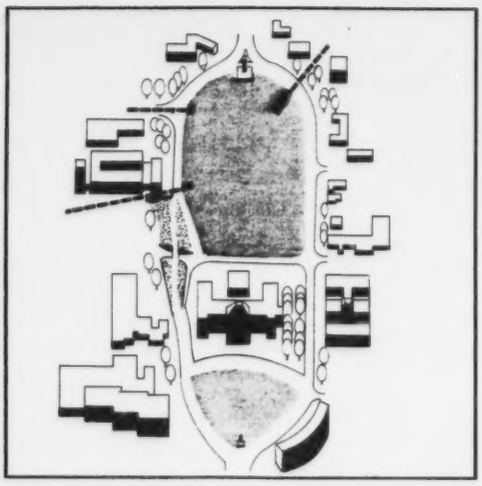
Comparative World Examples



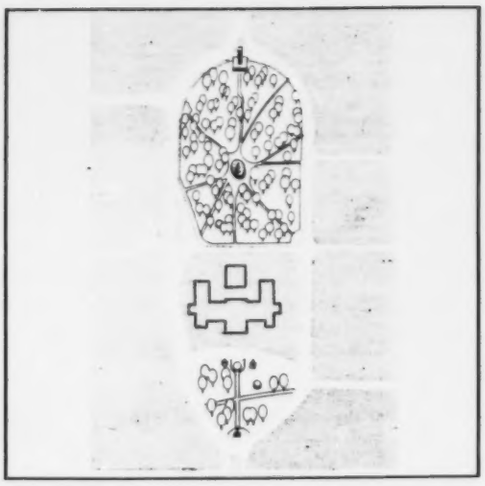
Urban Parks

Toronto

Queen's Park



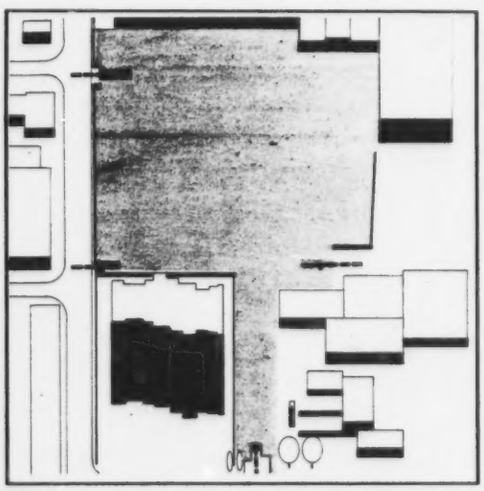
Edge Elements



Internal Elements

Toronto

The Grange



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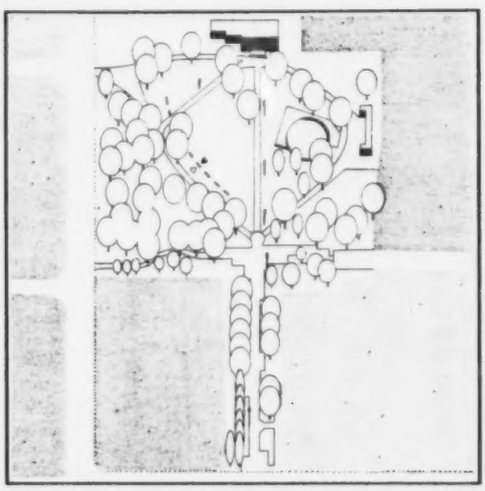
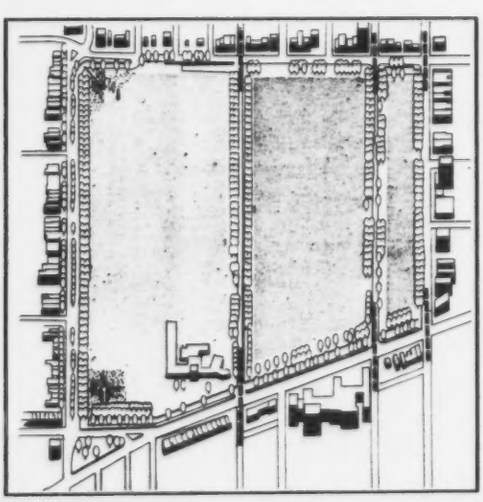


Internal Elements

Montreal

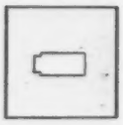
Parc La Fontaine



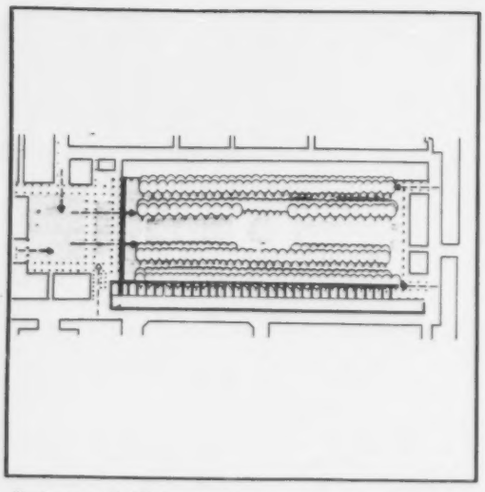
Edge Elements

Internal Elements

Paris



Palais Royale



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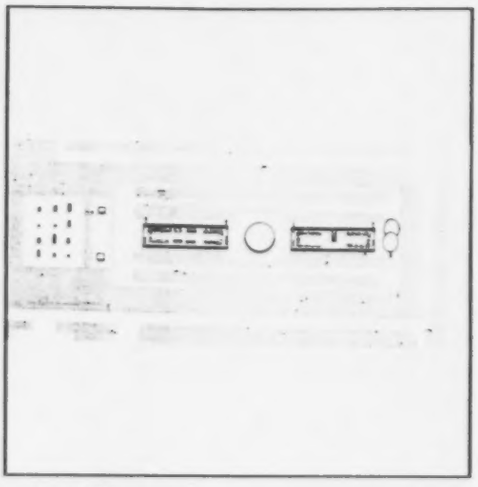
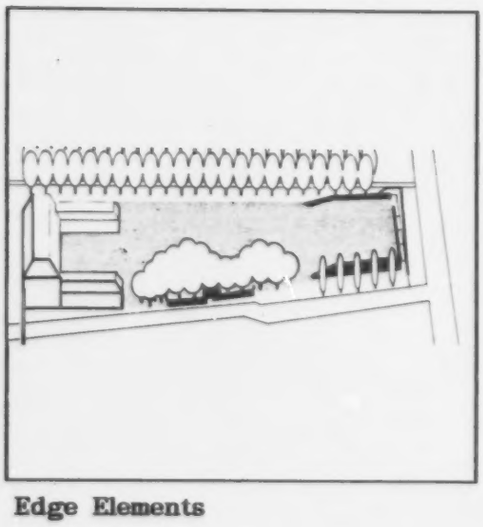


Edge Elements

Berlin

Museum Park



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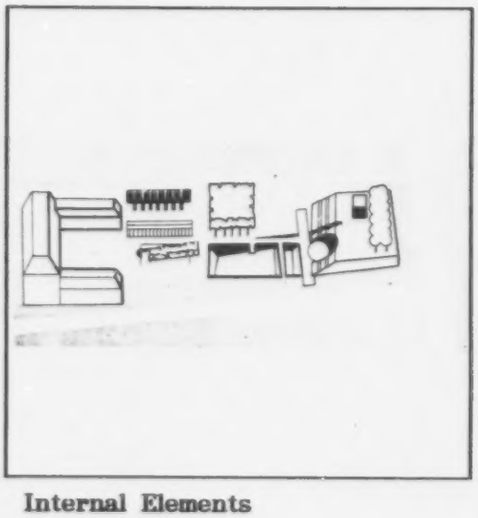
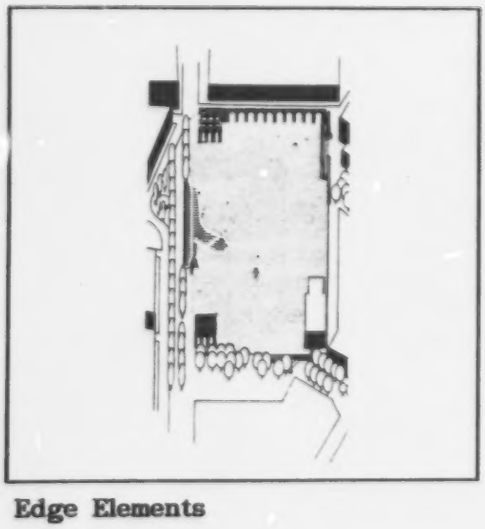


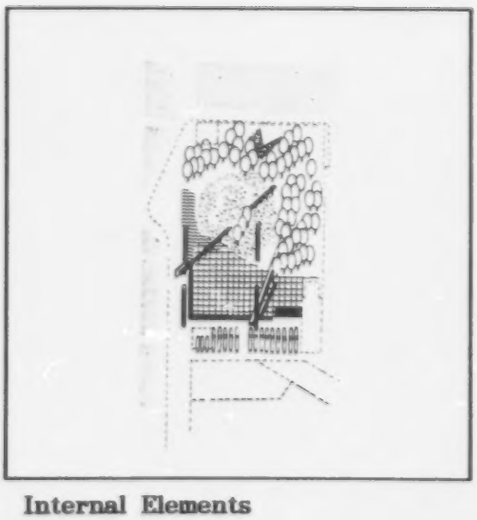
Internal Elements

Barcelona

Parc del Clot



Edge Elements



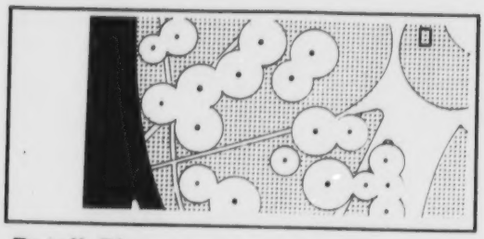
Internal Elements

Comparative World Examples

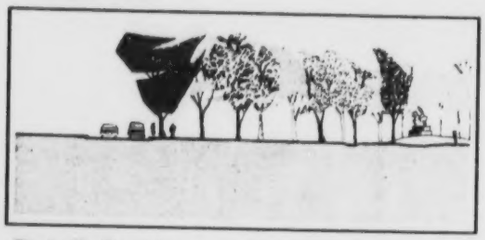
Urban Parks

Toronto

Queen's I



Detail Plan

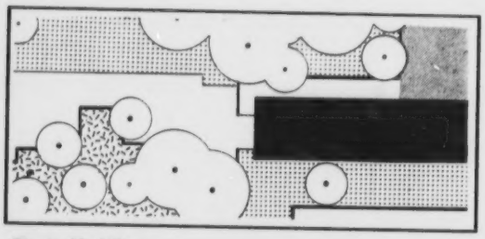


Detail Section

The Legislative Building sited on Queen's Park, designed in the 1890's by R.A. Waite, was originally part of the University of Toronto property. The site contains the north portion, "Queen's Park" which has several monuments, artwork, and floral arrangements in its interior with a circuit of crossing paths among the lawn and diverse planting of trees. The south portion faces University Avenue and acts somewhat as an enlarged forecourt to the Legislative Building.

Toronto

The Grange



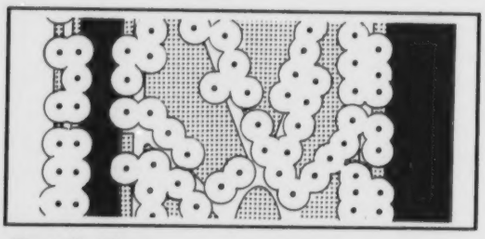
Detail Plan

Detail Section

The surrounding conditions and edges of the Grange are diverse, with a more open and normalized edge on Beverly Street (west). The south and east edges both work as specific entry areas. The park is composed with planted areas, playground spaces and a circuit of paths. The more structured approach from the south contains formalized planting areas and lines of trees. A number of community and recreational facilities use the park, as well as the surrounding mix of low residential buildings and one apartment tower adjacent to the site.

Montreal

Parc



Detail Plan

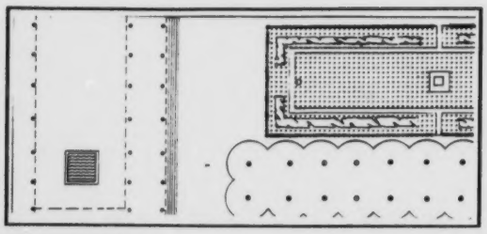
Detail Section

Parc la Fontaine contains a large curving lake, chalet restaurant, garden of marvels, sports and recreational fields, fountains and monuments. Of interest is the way in which the park has incorporated designed solutions for parking along its edges and has included a range of routes through it, connecting the city with the wide range of attractions and activities.

Paris

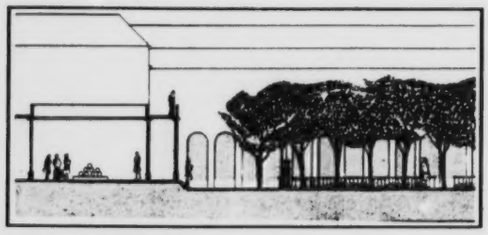
This urban garden represents an intermediate kind of space that reflects an aristocratic use of land; a transitional space between open park spaces and enclosed urban gardens.

The palace gardens are a special type of park space due in part to their isolation from the outside while still remaining accessible and public, and also because of the level of play and experimentation present in these gardens. This garden with its strong axial character was used as a set where theatrical effects of illusion were created through garden planting and displays as counterpoint to the surrounding architecture.



Detail Plan

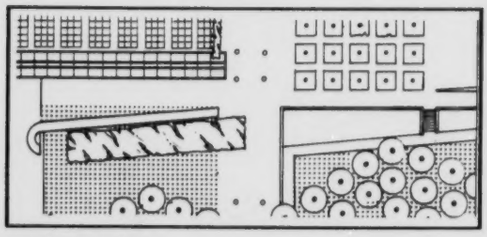
Palais Royale



Detail Section

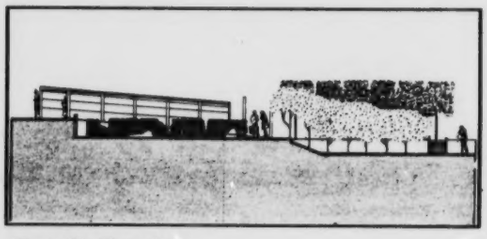
Berlin

The Berlin Museum Park covers an area of 9000 s.m. and is divided into distinct spatial areas each containing a specific feature or motif: ornamental hedges, arbours, formalized trees patterns, a water feature and axis, pavilions and constructed points of view with lawns and terraces connected to the outdoor exhibits presented by the Berlin Museum.



Detail Plan

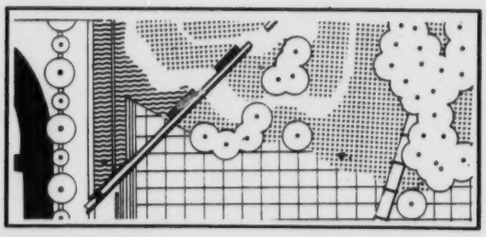
Museum Park



Detail Section

Barcelona

The central square of Parc del Clot is lowered with a surround set of stairs and creates a place separate from the surrounding environment. Newer elements, such as monumental light structures, illuminate major points in the park and give a contrasting diversity of new and old structures.

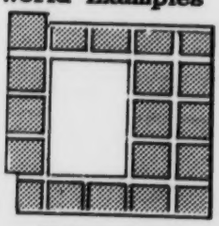


Detail Plan

Parc del Clot

Detail Section

Comparative World Examples



Urban Parks

Observations and Comparisons

The comparative examples of urban parks from other cities are selected as illustrative of a balance of natural and urban characteristics, of the city in the park and the park in the city.

Park La Fontaine in Montreal has a unified and treed perimeter, yet its internal organization reveals a division into three distinct areas, divided or united by two tree lined avenues. This division of the park is elaborated by a diversity of functions and programme areas. The larger parcel of the park contains the lake, chalet and smaller structures (school, pavilion and theatre), suggesting "pleasure grounds" with cultural exhibits and memorials. The middle parcel contains smaller park areas, with an emphasis on sports and recreation: baseball, tennis courts and small picnic places. The remaining third parcel contains mostly paths, trees and a circuit of movement through its interior.

The edges of the park are used to provide access for buses and parking areas behind treed enclosures. The three parts of the park can be distinguished by the treed avenues which are easily understandable as controlled entry points. The act of entering by car is filtered through a route parallel to the city street that allows cars to pull of the main traffic artery.

Queen's Park, encircled in traffic, is less safe for pedestrians to enter. Unlike Parc La Fontaine, which responds to a more diverse range of uses, Queen's Park acts more as a symbolic open space. The front space acting as forecourt responds to more ceremonial uses, political demonstrations and parades. The north portion of the park is used by office workers and students as a through route from one part of the university to the other.

In everyday use, the park has been isolated by the ring road of speeding cars, cutting off users and preventing any opportunity for those in their cars to slow down or to pull off, whereas at Parc La Fontaine, the city has been integrated into the system of the park in a limited but highly effective manner.

Parc del Clot in Barcelona, built on an existing building site, retains the traces of the building and exploits the potential of the site, maintaining and intensifying the surrounding streets and context. Parc Del Clot employs a diversity of arrangements of spaces, landscape, and objects. This recognition of an earlier use of perimeter walls also extends parts of the interior, trees, and paving to the perimeter areas of the site. The park contains a sunken hard surfaced square that complements the existing landscaped hill. New elements like elevated walkways connect the larger existing and newer spaces of the park and mutually bind new and old construction. All edges around the site are treated differently, yet with the careful positioning of monumental lights, the park at night attains a larger unity. These light towers also indicate major points of entry and give the park a unique and memorable character.

The Palais Royale in Paris designed by Jacques Lemercier presents that of an intermediate kind of space, sharing properties of both built and open space. This enclosed urban park or garden takes on a secret and poetic effect because of its withdrawal from the urban landscape. The built form that contains the gardens emphasizes this separation.

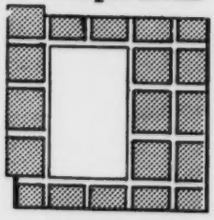
A comparison of **Palais Royale** to **Queen's Park** juxtaposes two quite different intentions with one common characteristic of an encircling limit (the walls of the palace in Palais Royale, and the traffic artery at Queen's Park) in order to examine the effect of the limit on the structuring of the open space within.

In the Queen's Park example, the presence of the encircling highway and lack of clear access points has completely isolated the park from the surrounding buildings. The institutional buildings that are located across the traffic artery do not present a cohesive face onto the park with the exceptions of the Whitney Building and the Frost Building both located to the south east of the park. In addition to the lack of connection to its immediate context, Queen's Park also suffers from a lack of internal structure and design. Smaller monuments and sculpture are prevented from forming a coherent pattern by unconsidered planting of trees that obscure and obstruct potentially important views and priority perspectives.

The **Grange Park** is also the site for many public demonstrations. Presently, the park in the inner city presents an assortment of edges and conditions. Beverly Street presents the most normalized edge where the park opens to the face of the sidewalk. Its north face is defined by the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Grange House, while its eastern edge creates a corner and back condition formed by the Ontario College of Art buildings without clear definition. The south edge presents the most explicit area of entrances and edges, where the original axis is underlined by planting and trees. These conditions, while presenting a good potential, have not been carried through into the spatial order of the park.

In contrast to this, the design of the **Berlin Museum Park**, which also contains a major public institution, consciously exploits the open space's relationship to its institution by intentionally creating a series of gardens designed as a reinterpretation of a baroque garden. The entire garden within is bordered by a line of trees, with a formal grid of trees marking one of the entrances to the garden. The axis in this park organizes along its length different areas featuring a specific motif, a water axis with fountains and pavilions, planned views, and terraces.

The Grange, with its formal relationship to AGO possesses great possibilities for an extension of gallery's exhibition space to an outdoor sculpture garden which could provide a highly evocative and catalytic structural element for a new ordering of the park.



Observations and Principles

1. Place Creation and Modification : Limits to Open Space

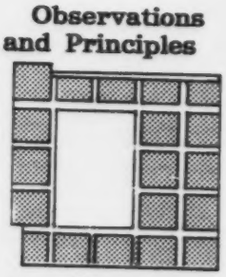
- Where possible, an urban park should be located where there are natural landforms and should relate to existing conditions. (urban, natural, etc.)
- The urban park functions as a part of a system of other public open spaces to promote an integrated system of movement through the city.

2. Place Definition

- The planning of the edges of the urban park can initiate a progression of more urban spaces to more natural landscapes.
- The subdivision of large city parks by an introduction of park boulevards into their interior provides animation to isolated areas in the centre of the urban parks.
- Entrances to urban parks should be distinctly marked and promote public use.
- Where urban parks border onto linear ravine parks, their connecting boundaries should be designed to consider progressions of descending spaces, landscape transitions and clear entrances.

3. Place of Possibilities : Space in relationship to objects, to each other and to a whole

- The location, positioning and selection of landscape elements, structures, walls, enclosures, clearings, pools and other water features, ornamental displays, greenhouses, and sitting places should be specifically designed to ensure overlap, multiple use and diversity in both a formal and ritualistic system of use and an informal and spontaneous manner.
- The urban park can contain many kinds and levels of urbane and natural spaces. These should be allowed to coexist in a comfortable balance that permits neighbourhood community use and the urban park's larger role as an open space for all city residents.



Metropolitan Parks

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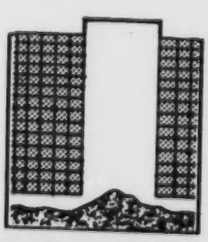
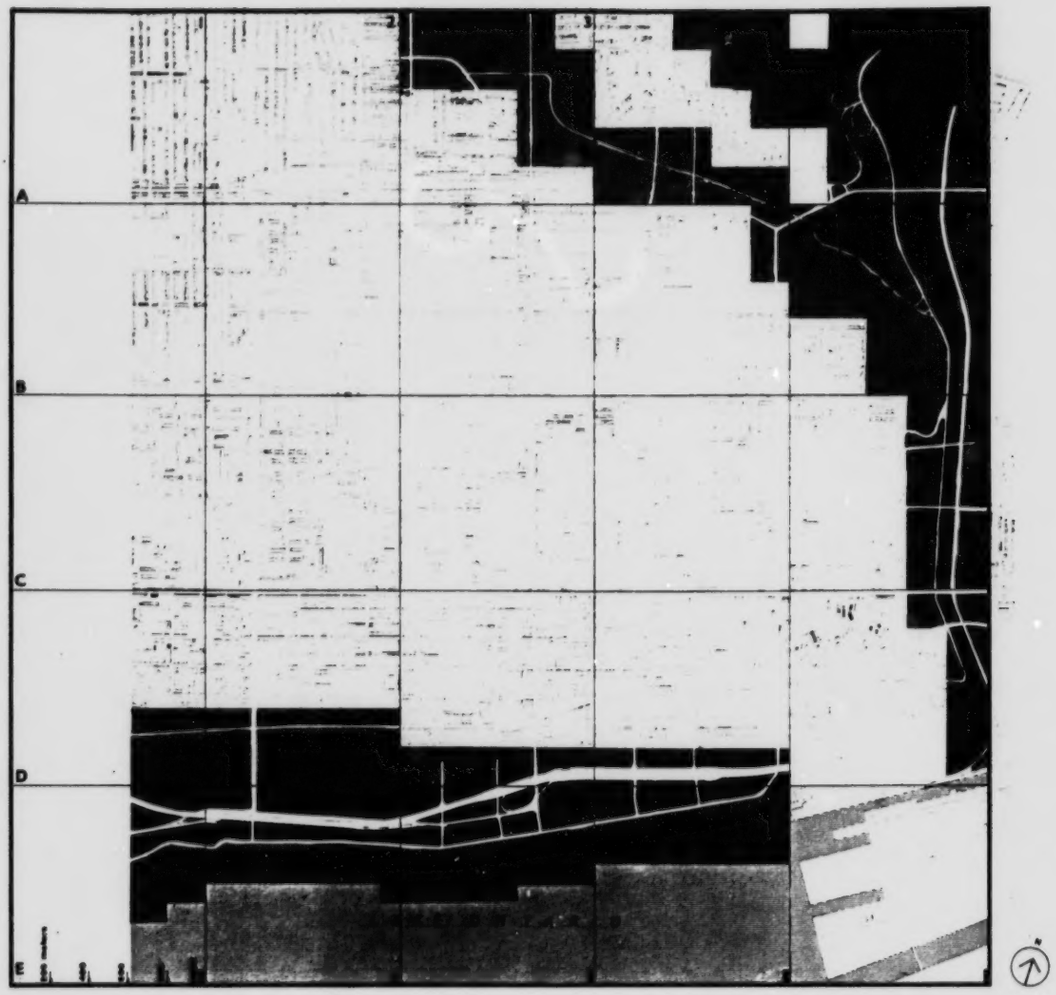
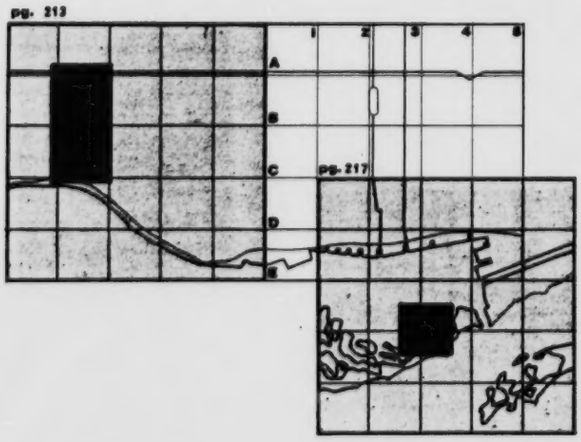




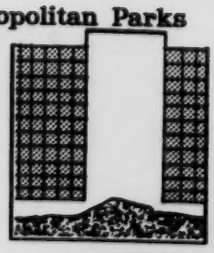
METROPOLITAN PARKS **M A P P I N G**



Metropolitan Parks

Definition	An open space of "grand dimensions" whose users come from a more regional area.

Location	Forms a limit to the downtown core; often is located at a major natural element
Size	The largest type of Toronto's open spaces; comparable to the size of a normal city neighbourhood.
Edge	The edges normally are made by both city streets and a natural boundary like the waterfront or a ravine. the edges to the city should be made as an intermediate zone having both elements of the city and the park, to extend the public space of the city into the natural setting of the park periphery.
Landscape	The planning of the park should allow for the intermediary zone between the city and the park. major public routes should travel through the park to promote constant use and occupation. Movement systems should clearly connect into public routes. The scale of the park permits a full range of public facilities.
Use	Large scale activities like exhibitions, amusement attractions, sports fields mixed with individual pursuits, and casual use. Planning should allow the use of the park by both large formal gatherings and individuals.
Weather	Areas of shelter and shade to be provided as a normal support occurring in a regular pattern through the park.
System	The metropolitan park can be the initiator or destination of an open space system established in the downtown core of the city.
Other	All routes should connect clearly to major public systems that run through the park. Built facilities should be designed to provide phone booths, lighting and emergency help.



Definition

A metropolitan park is an open space that possesses "grand dimensions" and whose users come more from the urban region than from the city proper. The metropolitan park, although in many cases surrounded by built up areas, was originally often planned at the fringes of the original city boundaries. This type is usually developed around a major natural feature.

For example, an implied set of boundaries of the centre of Toronto is formed by **High Park, the Toronto Islands and the Lower Don Valley lands.** High Park encompasses Grenadier Pond and an extensive tract of land. The Toronto Islands are special by virtue of being islands, and the Lower Don Valley, though presently underdeveloped as a public open space, contains the Don River and extensive valley lands. These metropolitan parks contain natural landsforms, like ravines, mounds, rivers, and ponds. While the external limits of the metropolitan park may be formed by the normal structure of the city grid, the internal order of this type generally sets out an independent set of structural organizations.

An important distinction should be made between the Metropolitan Park and the Provincial Park. The Metropolitan Park is still an open space set in the urban condition and cannot constitute a true "wilderness area" such as can be found in the Provincial Park's much larger and removed tracts of land. Metropolitan Parks in Toronto, like the Don Valley, are generally conceived and created as artifical natural settings that offer shelters to indigenous flora and fauna.

This singular ideal of the Metropolitan Park is being challenged by both theoreticians and by growing numbers of interested user groups who now suggest that the metropolitan park could more accurately reflect the nature of the users and consider the open space as a public space of grand dimension, striking a balance between the urbane and the artifical "natural" facility.

Adjacencies / Edges

Metropolitan parks, originally set on peripheries of cities, become engulfed by the city to the point where their edges eventually face complex urban conditions. Often these parks have one or more major edge onto a natural feature, but how the city actually is broached by the Metropolitan Park in setting up an exchange of the urbane spaces of the built city and the open public space of the park represents the essential character of this type.

The edges and the entrances into the metropolitan park can be developed in a way that makes the open space comprehensible to the user, by giving an understanding of the scale of the space in reading its systems and facilities.

The simple contrast between built and non-built form ignores the possibility of an intermediary zone of dialogue, of urbane edges, of public facilities, of a truly public access to its major open spaces.

The planners of the metropolitan park, such as High Park, or the Don Valley Lands would do well to emulate the international examples where a more pluralistic view of the nature of the park and of public space can be developed to accomodate a multiplicity of city users.

The edges are the interface where this can begin. This area of interface between the open space and the urban condition is a potential zone where an exchange of "natures" can be designed. Consequently, this intermediary zone should be considered by designers as a distinct space that carries elements of both the urban and the natural conditions, co-existing and reinforcing each other.

Facilities / Use : Intensity and Frequencies

The grand dimensions of the Metropolitan Park open the possibilities of use to boundless potential. The size of the metropolitan park allows for the accommodation of major built public facilities and major open space installations for performances, cultural displays, exhibition, major sports activities, major recreational enjoyment and large gatherings. It should also be noted that "wasting one's time" luxuriously in the space of a metropolitan park must be considered as part of use. Low intensities, non-use or infrequent use are quite meaningful and significant events that also should be recognized and promoted.

Buildings : Intensity and Frequency of Use and Safe Places

Buildings in Metropolitan Parks have historically been major public institutions like exhibition halls, amphitheatres, public theatres, zoological grounds, and botannical gardens that are architecturally memorable and significant. The building in the park is provided for public enjoyment and benefit and is traditionally more festive than is normally found in its urban counterpart. These buildings sometimes become architectural icons like the monumental Crystal Palace (by Paxton), the folly-like garden buildings of Kew Gardens in England, and the Umbraculo Pavilion in Barcelona.

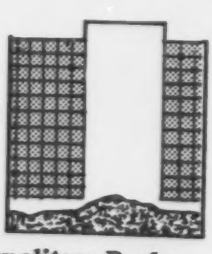
Toronto's counterparts can be found in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds and amusement parks like Ontario Place. These public pavilions are built at a scale to match the grandness of the Metropolitan Park. The smaller scale of public buildings, like washroom facilities, concessions, club houses, changerooms and shelters should equally reflect an architectural excellence.

All built form should be sited strategically in concert with a legible movement system to provide destination points and visual focal points to make the vast scale of the park comprehensible. As in smaller open space types, buildings also can furnish a setting for both day and night use, providing safe zones for telephone booths, first aid and security staff. It is particularly important that these facilities be set up at regular intervals within the park to provide individual users a sense of security and to also give reference points to measure distances to and from the more populated areas.

Spatial Structure : Surface, Form and Vegetation

The spatial structure of the Metropolitan Park first depends on a clear system of vehicular and pedestrian circulation that allows the user to move through the large open space with some understanding of its organization. Many large parks accomplish this by the use of a ring road that parallels the city edge. This technique allows the user to circle the entire metropolitan park, and to choose to enter the interior knowing that the way back to the ring road will lead back to the city street. This sets up the legible circulation while allowing both undulating and orthogonal types of roads or walking paths. The ring road also maximizes the vastness of its interior allowing grand views, as in the famous vista of the Long Meadow at Prospect Park in Brooklyn. Finally, the ring road provides the potential intermediary zone for more publicly oriented facilities and spaces, which mark a transition between the city and the park.

The road system, whether based on the ring road, a radiating system or by disecting roads through the park, must be accompanied by a corresponding network and pattern of landscape systems and park structures that set up a second order of structure of the park. Major elements like water fountains, public facilities, exhibition halls, gardens, and formal tree planting should be sited to elaborate upon the spatial structure of the park. The Metropolitan Park can sustain both large areas of natural landscapes and hard surfaced public spaces in a balance that allows for a full range of interests and programmes.



System

The legibility of the Metropolitan Park is heightened by its connections back to the city and to other open space types. The natural landforms of Toronto, some of which occur in existing open spaces, provide the city with a great potential because of the linear ravine spaces that travel the length of the city and can link to the lakefront.

These connective pieces provide a possible continuous system that can join the metropolitan parks together in a larger regional context. ie. High Park, with its ravines and Grenadier Pond joining a continuous waterfront system (though presently cut off by Lakeshore Boulevard), in turn connecting to the Toronto Islands and to the Don Valley, and enventually to the Rouge Valley.

At a scaller scale, the Metropolitan Park can act as a destination point and anchor integrated with local systems and patterns of small urban places, urban parks and small squares.

Ownership: Public

Frontage: 1040m

Depth: 1650m

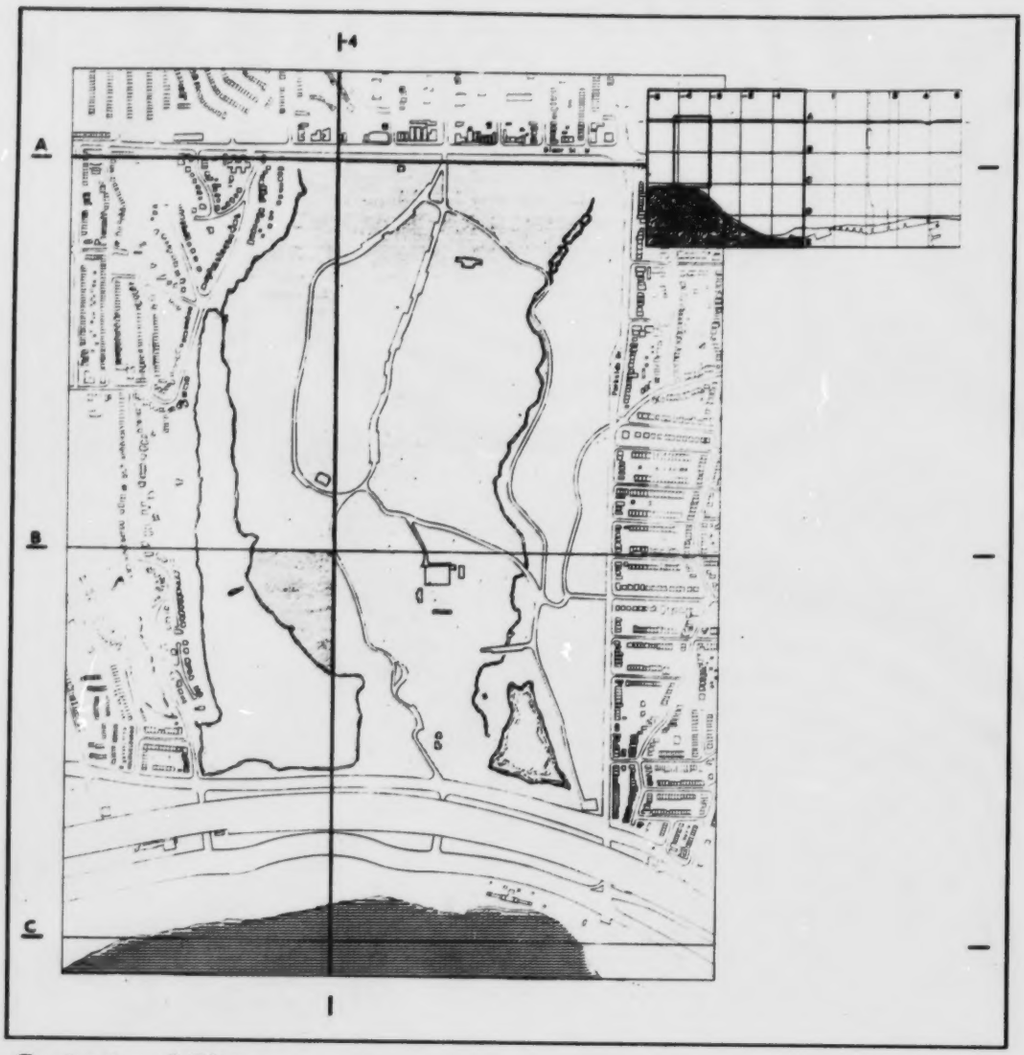
Area: 1,716,000sm

Form:
80% Soft Surface: trees, lawn, flower beds
20% Hard Surface: asphalt drive, paved walkways

Edges:
North: Bloor Street
South: The Queensway
East: Parkside Drive
West: Grenadier Pond

Use:
recreation
scenic promenade
open-air performances
picnics
exhibitions, (floral, animal...)
historic home site

System: forms natural boundary to city neighbourhoods and central city area



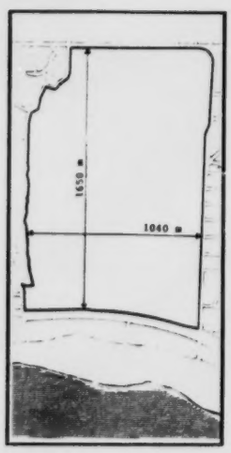
Context and Plan

High Park was originally a private estate owned by John George Howard. After the donation by Howard of his estate, the boundaries of High Park were considerably expanded by further acquisitions by the city. Colborne Lodge, named after Howard's patron, Sir John Colborne, still stands on a hill overlooking the lake. The park is located just east of the Humber River Valley and south of Bloor Street, bounded by Parkside Drive extending down to the Queensway to the south, separating it from Lake Ontario. High Park contains a large pond, (Grenadier Pond), and a natural ravine interconnected with a series of winding woods and paths.

High Park makes a distinct edge with the surrounding city streets. Its main entrance facing onto Bloor Street consists mainly of car access and caters to the efficient and safe flow of traffic, while not exploring the potential of a more public type of space that would take advantage of the nearby subway station and the commercial and pedestrian traffic on Bloor Street. The park edge here is an expanse of open space with scattered trees and picnic grounds raised up from the street level.

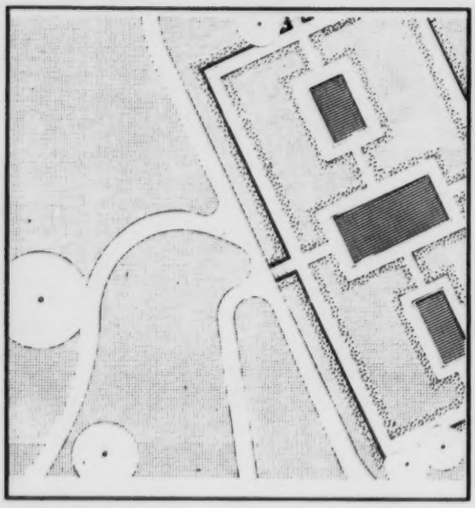
Volumetric

Movement



Size

Public/Private



Detail Plan

Use

The western ravine edge is heavily forested to the mouth of Grenadier Pond. The eastern edge to the facing residential neighbourhood on Parkside Drive is also densely forested with two other entrances that again cater to the passage of cars. The separation of High Park from the lake prevents the park from the obvious rich connection it could make to the entire waterfront system and negates a wonderful opportunity of extending its borders to encompass public beach facilities as a suitable park boundary rather than the many lanes of traffic.

The facilities of High Park include the original Howard home, a children's petting zoo, a small train, floral exhibits, outdoor performances, picnic grounds, a restaurant and playgrounds. These facilities are set into the interior of the park and are reached by an irregular network of roads and paths that run through open spaces and through densely forested areas. The present system of movement in high Park has been criticized by several interest groups for its lack of ligibility that makes many users feel unsafe and isolated from the populated areas beyond.

High Park

Ownership: Public with private leases

Frontage: 250m

Depth: 690m

Area: 172,500sm

Form:
80% Soft Surface: lawn, trees, flower beds
20% Hard Surface: paved walkways, promenades, ferry docks

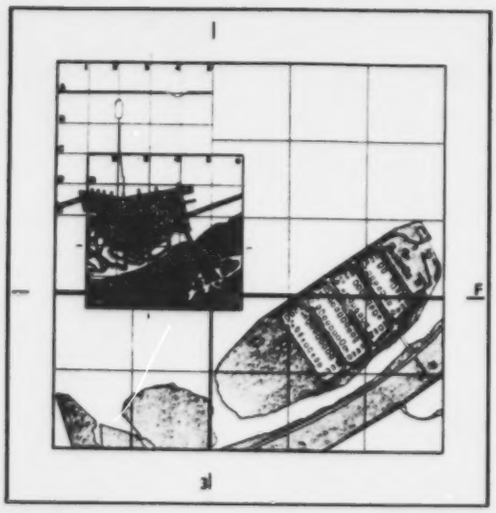
Edges:
North: Toronto Inner Harbour
South: Wards Island
East: Wards Island
West: Snake Island

Use:
residential
recreation
yacht club
scenic promenade
picnics

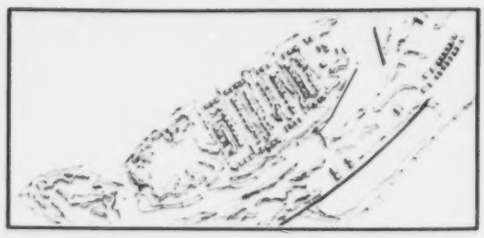
System:
connection to Wards Island, Centre Island
network of unique island public spaces

Algonquin Island

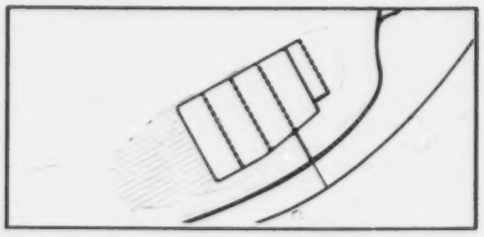
Metropolitan Park



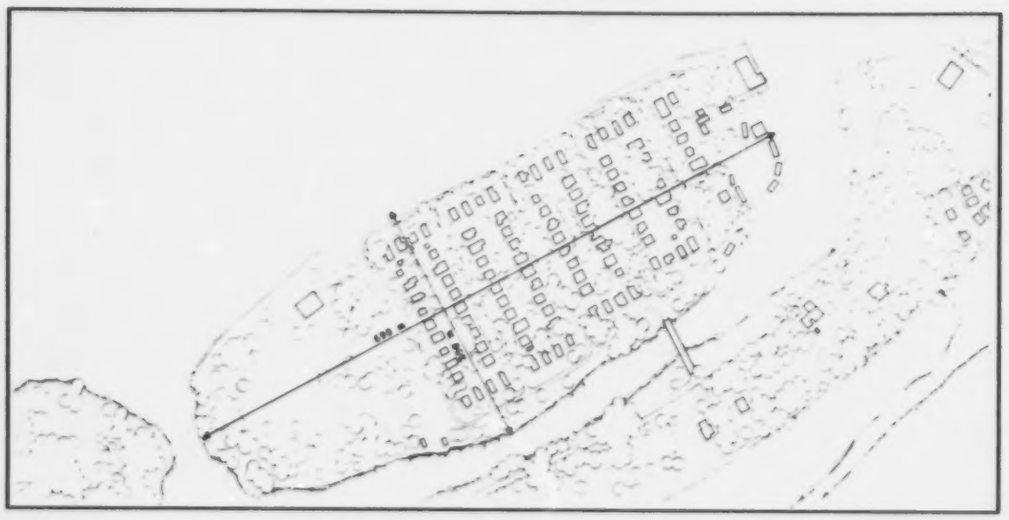
Context



Volumetric



Movement



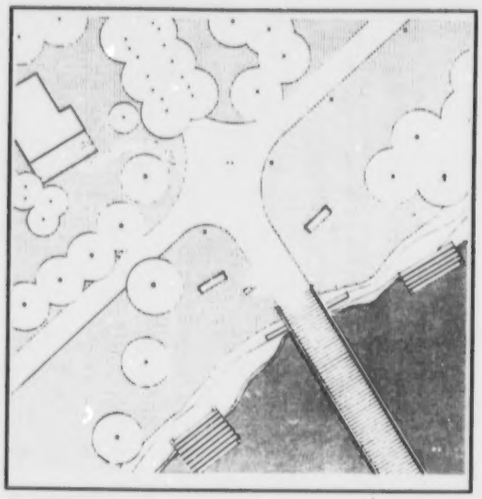
Plan

The Toronto Islands form a string of small islands off the city shore of Lake Ontario and establish an inner harbour. These islands are considered as a metropolitan park by virtue of their special landform nature, scale, position as a boundary to the city, and by their regional attraction.

They contain a wide and contrasting set of functions and facilities. Part of the islands are inhabited by year long residents and other islands are uninhabited. The islands are cut by the western and eastern channels and form an entry area into the Toronto harbour.

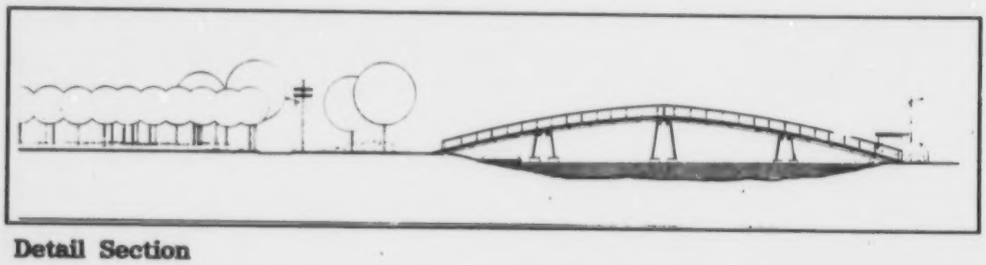
The islands also contain an airport, yacht clubs, a children's amusement park, beaches, inner lagoons, gardens and open green meadows. The island ferry terminal is located at the foot of Yonge Street, with three island destination points: Ward's Island, Centre Island, and Hanlan's Point. The island are sites for festivals, and large picnics and are enormously popular with both the Toronto citizenry and visitors.

Public Private



Detail Plan

Use



Detail Section

Algonquin Island is reached by a single bridge that crosses from Ward's Island, and is partially inhabited by a small community of cottages with a local daycare centre laid out in a grid regulated by orthogonal sidewalks. Its western half is undeveloped open space of wild meadows and brush surrounded by the water. The eastern tip of the island is occupied by a private yacht club and boating facility.

This island reflects the diversity of types of spaces possible in the large scale of the metropolitan park. The community on the Toronto Islands lends a stability to the whole, and its ambience is an attraction in itself as a pleasant walk through its pedestrian sidewalks. The natural side of the island illustrates an original landscape in contrast to the manicured lawns and water edges found on the other islands.

Algonquin Island

Toronto

Toronto Islands

Plan

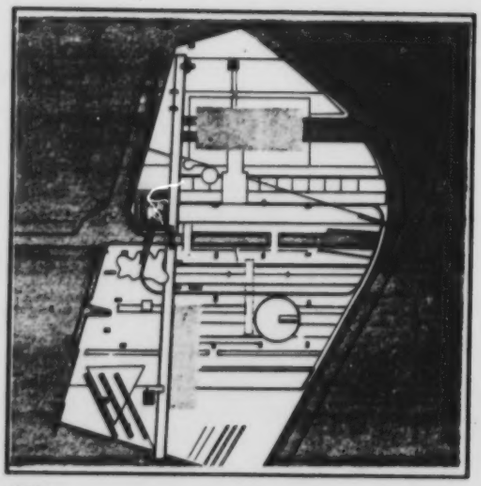
View

The Toronto Islands form a string of small islands off the city shore of Lake Ontario and establish the Inner Harbour. These islands are considered as a metropolitan park by virtue of their special landform nature, scale, position as a boundary to the city, and by their regional attraction.

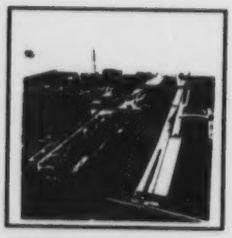
They contain a wide and contrasting set of functions and facilities. Part of the islands are inhabited by year long residents and other islands are uninhabited. The islands are cut by the western and eastern channels and form an entry area into the Toronto harbour.

Paris

Park La Villette



Plan

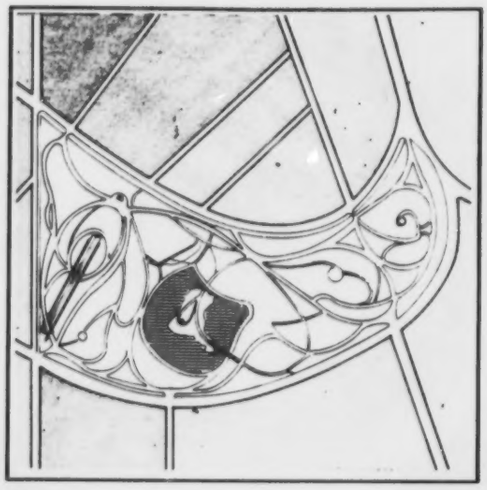


View

This unbuilt project designed by Rem Koolhaas and The Office for Metropolitan Architecture was part of a limited competitions for a design for the Parc de la Villette in Paris. The site, 55 hectares of industrial building land and former slaughter houses situated to the north east of

Paris has been the subject of several competitions over the past twenty years, and has always addressed the issue of the reclamation of former industrial lands. The site is crossed through its centre by a canal which forms an open end of a Haussman type of cross-roads.

Paris



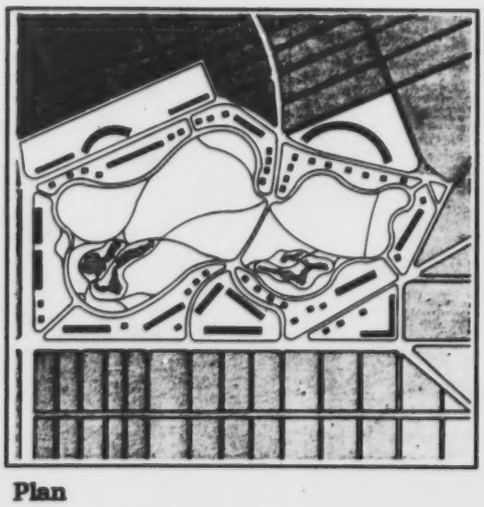
Buttes Chaumont

Plan

Buttes Chaumont Park, located in the south east of Paris, is an urban public park laid out in a picturesque pattern under Baron Haussman in the 1860's. This park formed part of a hierarchy of planted areas in the city designed by his engineer Alphand, including promenades, squares, public gardens and suburban parks.

The design of Buttes Chaumont was based on an earlier prototype of the new city park at Birkenhead located in a suburb of Liverpool designed by Joseph Paxton.

Liverpool



Birkenhead

Plan

Birkenhead Park was originally located in a suburb of Liverpool, and was designed in 1814 by the well known gardener Joseph Paxton, (famous for the Crystal Palace) as a new prototype for an urban park of 183 acres.

Birkenhead Park served as a model for both Haussman and Olmstead. Paxton integrated the large park into the city by surrounding the park with a range of different single and multiple house types within the boundaries of the park. These housing structures share both the surrounding streets and the interior way of the park, with alternating fronts and gardens that set up contrasts and richness. Through the use of an interior road, Paxton established another front space, sprinkled with smaller structures and housing types in a garden context, creating an intermediary zone between the park and the city.

Comparative

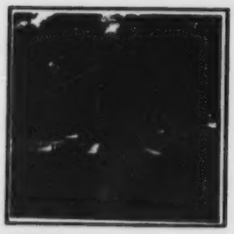
World Examples

Metropolitan Parks

Toronto

High Park

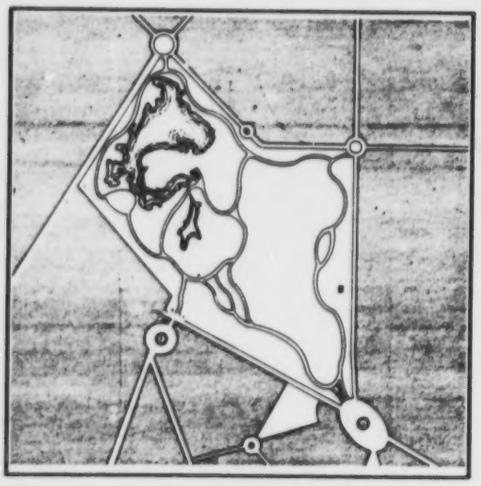
Plan



View

High Park was originally a private estate owned by John George Howard. After the donation by Howard of his estate, the boundaries of High Park were considerably expanded by further acquisitions by the city. Colborne Lodge, named after Howard's patron, Sir John Colborne, still stands on a hill overlooking the lake.

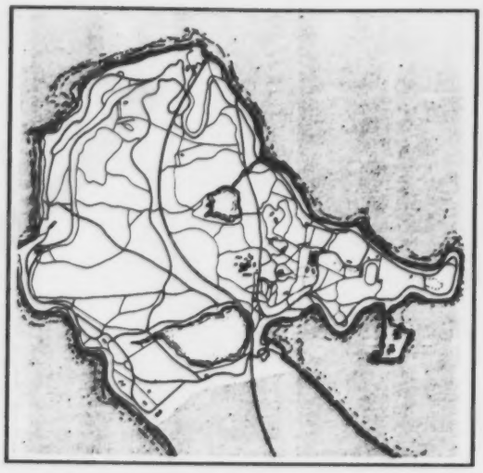
Prospect Park



Plan

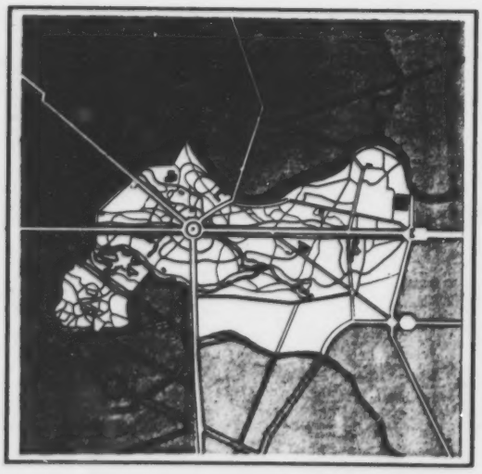
View

Prospect Park, a joint design by Frederick Law Olmstead and C. Vaux, is located in the City of Brooklyn. Designed after his major work in Central Park, Prospect Park is considered to be Olmstead's most successful and satisfying park design.



Stanley Park

Stanley Park was originally a military reserve that was turned into parkland by the federal government through the efforts of Vancouver city council, and was officially opened in 1888. Stanley Park is one of the largest inner metropolitan parks on the continent. Within walking distance from downtown, the park is a peninsula rimmed by a sea wall and walkway all along the water's edge. The walk introduces the user to the ocean, the harbour, and the forest and gives spectacular views of the mountains and the city. Along with the enormous forested area are located internationally known facilities such as the aquarium, a zoo, a "Lost Lagoon", botannical gardens, yacht clubs, restaurants and golf course.



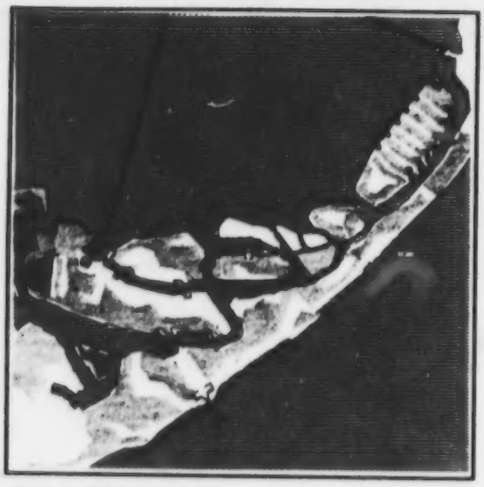
Tiergarten

The Tiergarten is a large metropolitan park located in Berlin, framed by the Spree River and a boundary canal. The context around the Tiergarten contains embassies, motorways, city gates, tree planted areas, museums, libraries and philharmonic halls. The park in its original condition, prior to the Second World War, contained clear demarcations of forest areas from meadow areas, and had a system of monuments which have since been stored away or lost.

Metropolitan Parks

Toronto

Toronto Islands



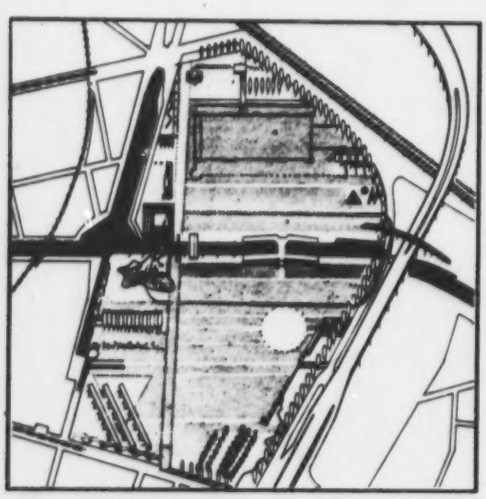
Edge Elements

Internal Elements

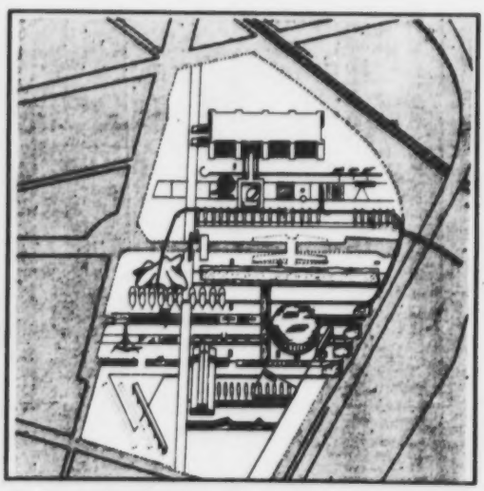
The islands also contain an airport, yacht clubs, a children's amusement park, beaches, inner lagoons, gardens and open green meadows. The island ferry terminal is located at the foot of Yonge Street, with three island destination points: Ward's Island, Centre Island, and Hanlan's Point. The island are sites for festivals, and large picnics and are enormously popular with both the Toronto citizenry and visitors.

Paris

Park La Villette



Edge Elements



Internal Elements

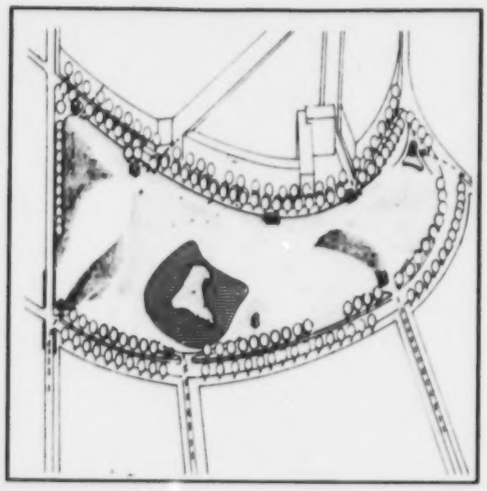
In this project, the designer proposes a park that is not dependent on specific programmes but assumes a constant evolution of use that will employ the various structures and landscape elements that are placed on the site. The site is structured by bands of elements running east-west, parallel to the canal. The design develops a language of planting: the linear forest, and the circular forest.

Layered over these bands are patterns of nodes formed by kiosks, recreation fields, picnic areas, and refreshment stands. The main promenade crosses through all bands with a orthoganal "ring" that branches off the promenade to encircle the major area of the park and the final layer of important monuments and structures.

Paris

Buttes Chaumont

Internal Elements



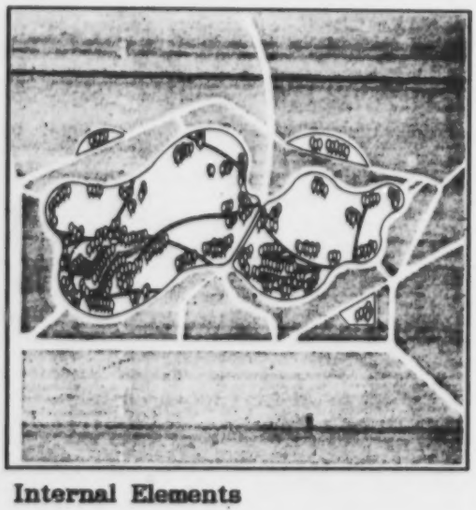
Edge Elements

The Alphand park treats the park in a fundamentally different way from Olmstead and Paxton. This park is a a celebration of technology and treats the natural garden as an artificial nature constructed in space. The effect of the new machinery substitutes iron and cast iron for the organic materials of rock, wood and stone used by Olmstead and Paxton.

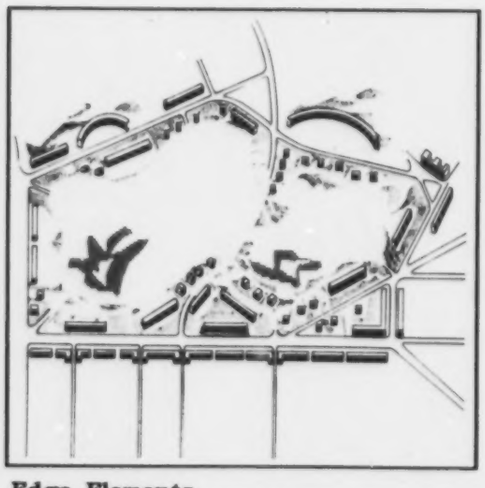
The design of the park created a spectacle of magnificent expanse and outward show. It was made to be looked at and enjoyed; as public space it worked almost as if it were merchandise, its customer, the public. This integrated idea of the park and nature with the machine made the natural more natural than nature itself, since constructed natural features could be provided in any situation on any site according to demand.

Liverpool

Birkenhead



Internal Elements



Edge Elements

The new development that was initiated at Birkenhead Park was the introduction of two independent movement systems, one for pedestrians, and the other for horse and carriage. The wider route undulates within the park and forms a circuit while smaller paths connect into it and relate to smaller independent functions.

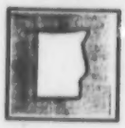
The surrounding street with the encircling crescents and housing forms contributes to the park by visual and physical connection to the open space. Unlike the example of Prospect Park where a sharp contrast exists between the city and the open space, the street, the housing types, gardens, and entrances form a distinct zone that enhances the publicness of the park edge and injects a landscape into the realm of the city.

Comparative

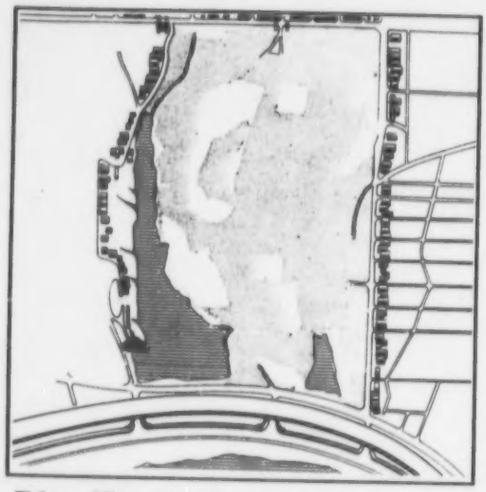
World Examples

Metropolitan Parks

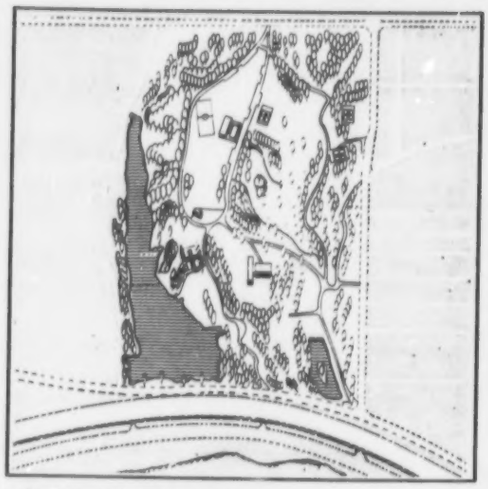
Toronto



High Park



Edge Elements

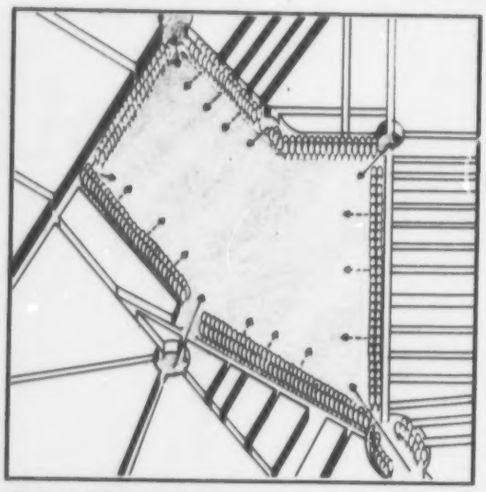


Internal Elements

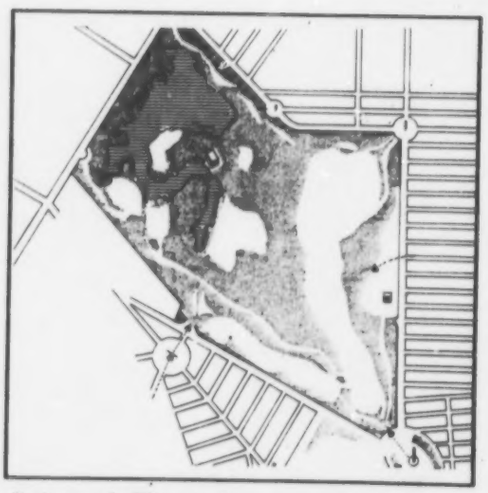
The park is located just east of the Humber River Valley and south of Bloor Street, bounded by Parkside Drive extending down to the Queensway on the South. Its major features are a large pond and ravine interconnected with a series of winding woods and paths. These paths and many of the later plantings were consciously cultivated by its earliest planners to promote a totally "natural" effect, and to suggest an original landscaped condition. Cultural activities that occur in the park include an annual summer Shakespearean production. Facilities and features of High Park include picnic areas, floral exhibits, public promontories, animal exhibits, and treed and open green spaces.

Brooklyn

Prospect Park



Edge Elements

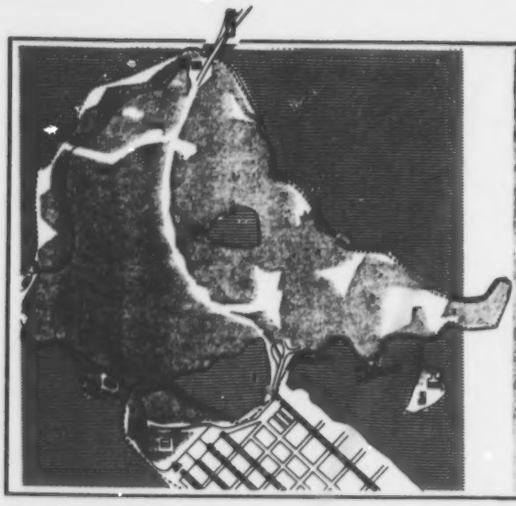


Internal Elements

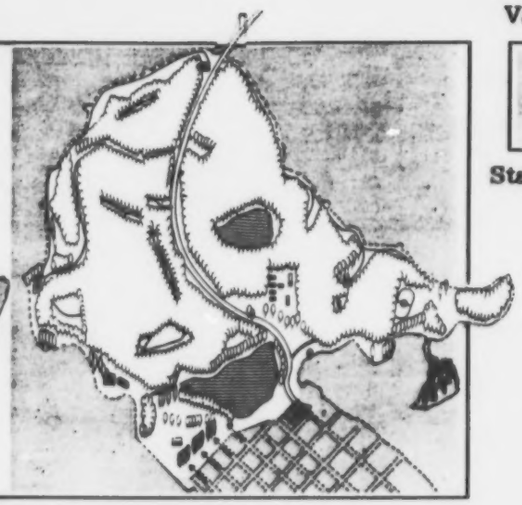
Prospect Park, unlike Central Park, has irregular edges formed by large frontages on Ninth Avenue and Flatbush Avenue. Prospect Park employs broad curving spaces as open meadows of green that give the park a sense of spaciousness These spaces are connected by park structures, bridges, and arches along with separate systems for footpaths, bridlepaths and carriageways. The consideration of site circumstances and the design of "public pleasure grounds" formed the background to the design of the park. The strong presence of a lake and spacious open areas parallel to the surrounding streets and principal entry point into the park involve the park and the city in a symbiotic and considered manner.

Vancouver

Stanley Park



Internal Elements

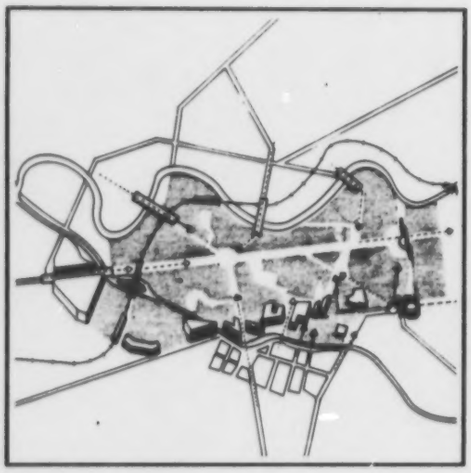


Edge Elements

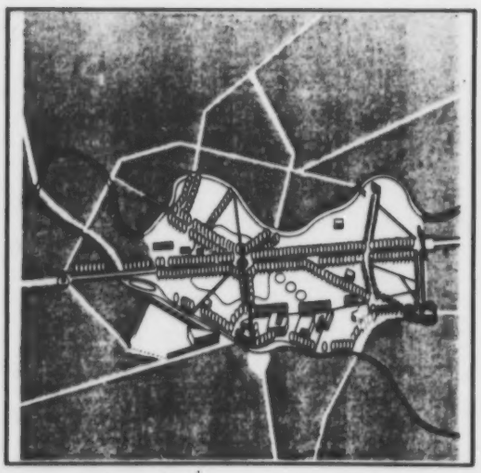
Stanley Park is connected to the downtown by the Lions Gate Bridge and avenue that crosses the park. Its waterfront network connects to other shoreline routes like English Bay, and connects into the West End residential neighbourhood of Vancouver. The system of movement of the park is formed by a primary ring road with secondary routes that connect to the interior.

Berlin

Tiergarten



Internal Elements



Edge Elements

This park is a good example of a mature metropolitan park where a strong bond has been developed betwen itself and the city, the city routes, Baroque alignments, gates, public facilities and cultural buildings. These substantially contribute to the attractiveness of the park and its continued focus of the city in its use and appropriation by its citizens.

The difference in layout and pattern of the Tiergarten as a metropolitan park type has evolved particular city and park interrelationships. Especially interesting is the way in which monumental objects, through their situations within the space, mark off and set in focus the user's logic of the space through memory and relationships.

Comparative

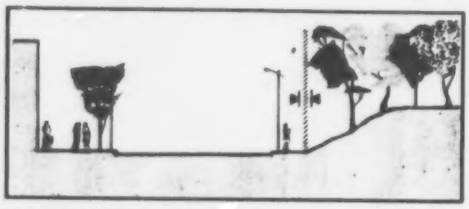
World Examples

Metropolitan Parks

Toronto

High Park

Detail Plan



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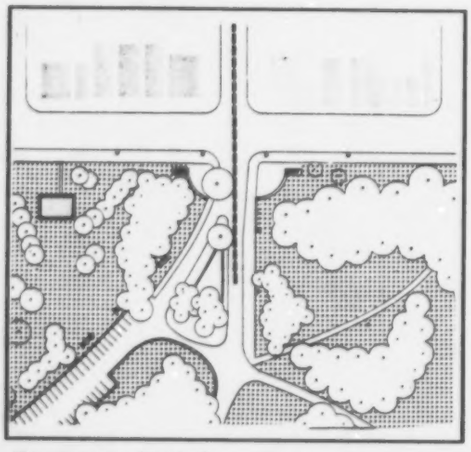
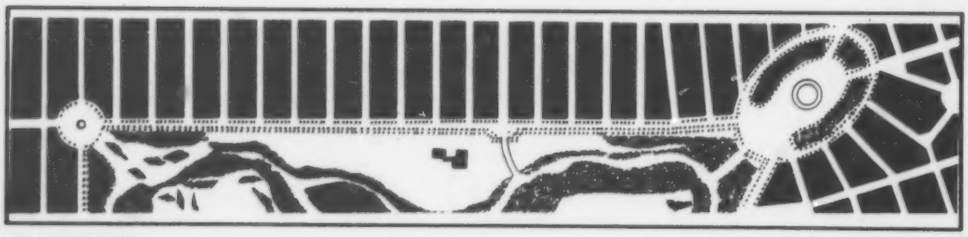


Entrance Detail

Brooklyn

Prospect Park



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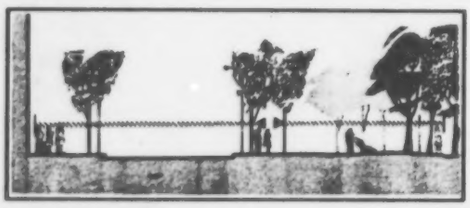

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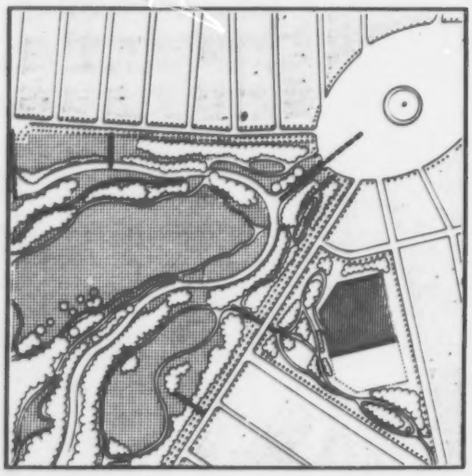
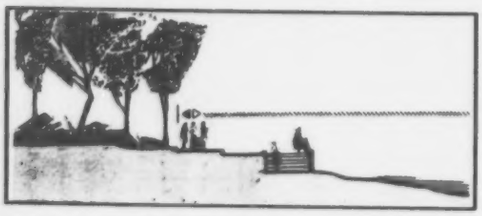


Entrance Detail

Vancouver

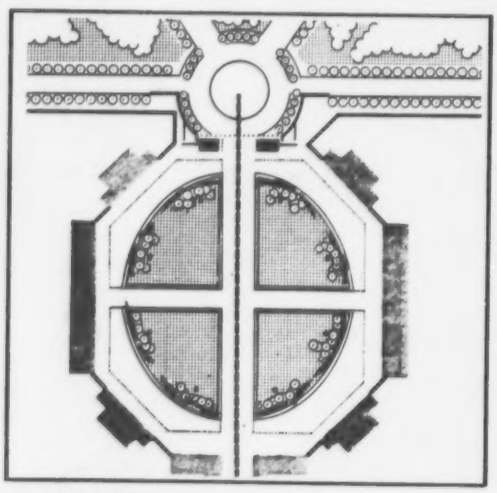
Stanley Park

Detail Plan



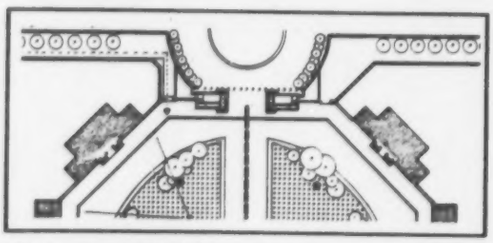
Entrance Detail

Berlin



Tiergarten

Detail Plan



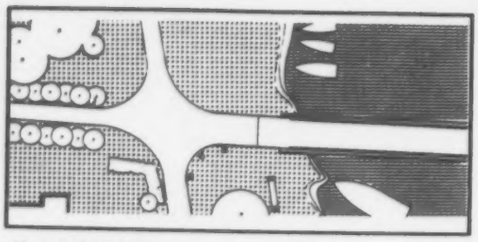
Entrance Detail

Comparative
World Examples

Metropolitan Parks

Toronto

Toronto Islands



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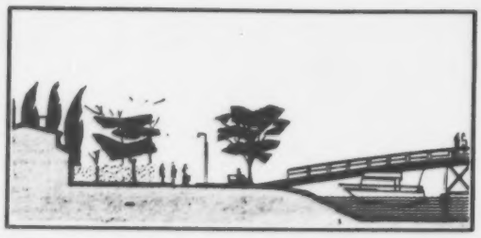

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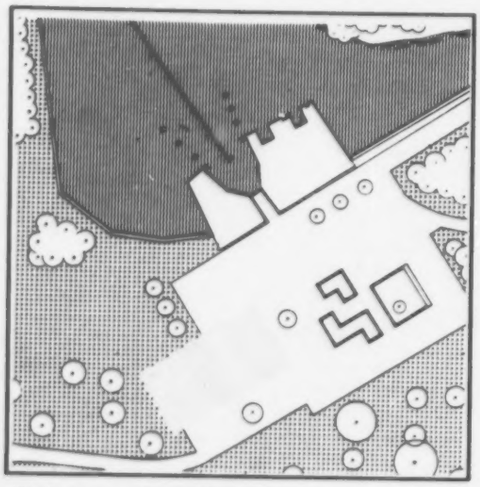
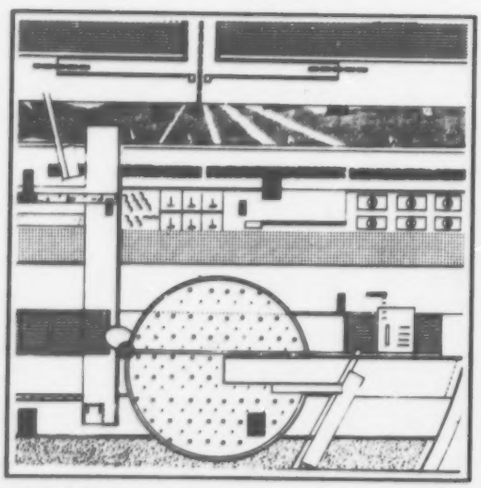


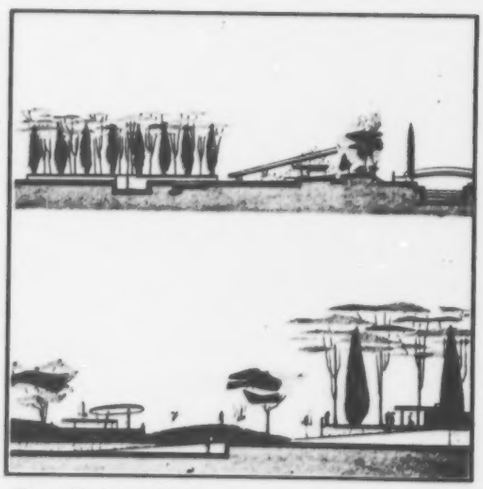
Entrance Detail

Paris

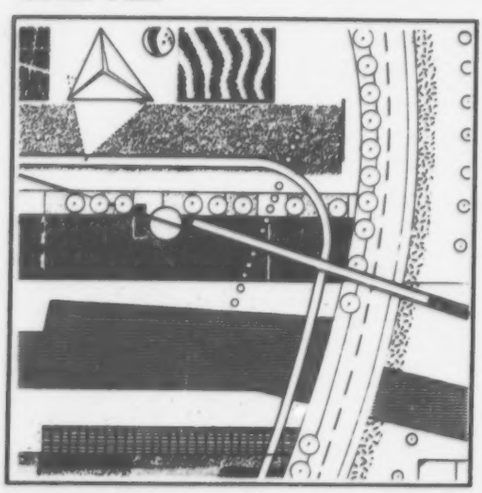
Park La Villette



Detail Plan



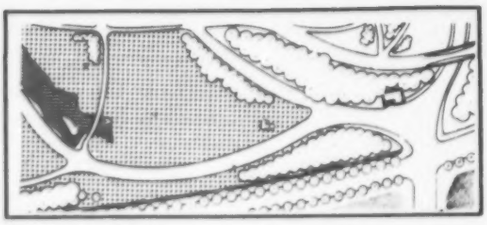
Detail Sections



Entrance Detail

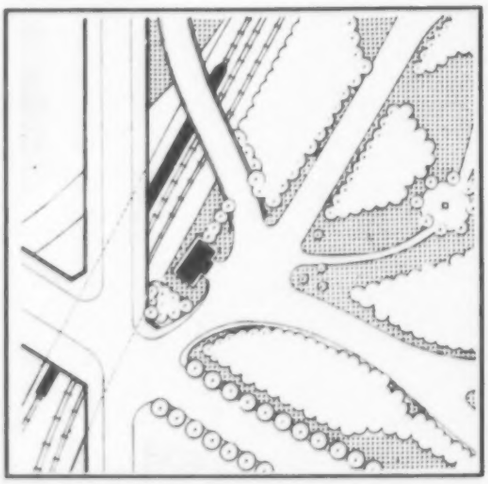
Paris

Detail Section



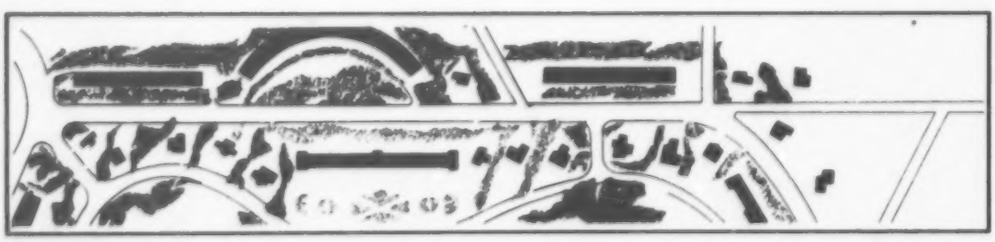
Detail Plan

Buttes Chaumont



Entrance Detail

Liverpool

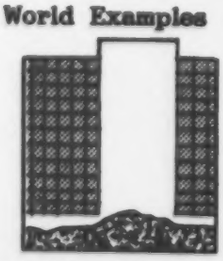


Detail Plan

Birkenhead

Detail Sections

Comparative
World Examples



Metropolitan Parks

Observations and Comparisons

The Metropolitan Park, from its original conception as a gift from a European aristocratic elite, to its more recent 19th and 20th century North American formulations, has been continually evolving in its role and relationship to the city. This progression of ideas involves a full range of design philosophies, social objectives and programmes. Examples of these various ideals in park design refer to the park as **pleasure grounds**, **reform park**, **playground park**, and to more recent incarnations like **recreational facility**, and **open space system**. Each of these ideals can be traced through the physical combinations and changing emphasis on park elements like water, trees, borders, movement, sculpture, and architecture of built facilities.

Recent Toronto examples of this type as **parks of attractions**, like Ontario Place and Canada's Wonderland, illustrate newly created metropolitan parks on the edges of the city. The wider attractions that these parks offer, and the distinctive character and image they portray have begun to supplant the traditional idea of High Park as a Metropolitan Park. The parks of attractions have become a place to be in public, to be seen in a context of large crowds. The deeper significance of the evolving metropolitan park lies in the ways in which their organizational structures, monuments, borders and open spaces engage the public, and how well they successfully serve the intermixing of persons and diverse activities.

The Berlin Tiergarten is an example of a mature Metropolitan Park. The Baroque planning of Berlin and the connections into and through the Tiergarten offer some insights into how movement between the city and the park can promote a richer intersection of urban form and open space. The smaller entry area of the Potsdamer Platz and Leipziger Platz located west of the Tiergarten illustrates a connective series of open spaces designed by the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, that provide a transition from the city to the Tiergarten through formal character, materials and monuments. The initial space is a highly formal large octogonal urban space with arranged sculptures and tree planting around an inset oval form. Public gates, located on axis with the open spaces and the larger park, mark an entrance into a smaller circular entrance, which borders onto the more naturally landscaped park, and initiates the radiating streets that form the major movement system of the park.

The formal axis of the arrangement also allows a secondary passage around the public gates that forms a subsidiary system of smaller courts and paths that connect to the smaller scale neighbourhoods. This solution to movement distinguishes between the high form of access through the city gates and the other lower form that creates a sequence of places that have a practical and useful value in connecting to the lesser surrounding street pattern. Schinkel's design of the Tiergarten gates and entrance squares provides a significant and highly elaborated pulic place of moving between the city and the metropolitan park.

In sharp contrast, the entry gates and places of arrival in the examples of the **Toronto Islands** and **High Park** undervalues the immense and significant roles that these public spaces could present. The passage to the Toronto Islands offers users the wonderful experience of the ferry ride across the lake to a landing that offers the choice of three destinations. When one arrives at Centre Island, large crowds are left to wander in any direction, with little sense of the **"city in the park"** and the **"park in the city"**.

This concept is illustrated in Schinkel's planting of a formal ciruclar tree arrangement around the Potsdamer Tor as a reminder of the park ahead. By contrast, the idea of arrival at the Toronto Island park is not suggested by a significant spatial or architectural concept that would lead visitors to understand its regional significance in a metropolitan context. The existing pavilion located nearby is quite beautiful but unrelated to an overall spatial organization.

Perhaps more telling is the manner in which the loading of the ferry boat is handled on the often crowded trip back. Instead of being treated to a formal and civic space, crowds are forced to line up in a canopied "corral" provided for the sole purpose of crowd control, mirroring the same concern for orderly embarcation that exists at the city's ferry dock which also disregards any potential for a satisfying public space.

A good potential exists for the connection of the ferry terminal to currently disconnected bordering open spaces further off in the Harbourfront lands. A connection of these spaces could create a coherent system of movement from the more urban public spaces of Harbourfront to the naturally landscaped islands across the lake.

High Park has five entrances into the park. The Bloor Street entrance is probably the most heavily used, being served by the nearby subway and also providing a common access for pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The entrance to the park conflicts with the need for a transition zone between the urban nature of the city and the natural elements of the park. The single functional view of the efficient moving of cars and pedestrians is typical of how other entry points into the park fail to integrate the street into the space of the park.

Consequently, the social qualities and opportunities to understand the park, its structure and publicness are decreased. The Tiergarten example provided not only discernable choices of movement and entry but tangible supports for different needs, spaces and more significant memorable experiences. The entry areas of both High Park and the Toronto Islands could become highly public spaces that celebrate the entrance and takes advantage of the large numbers of people that might stop and linger as they pass through, or those people on the street that might only use the introductory public space.

Unlike the pastoral landscape of the Toronto Islands or the found ravines that make up High Park, **Stanley Park** in Vancouver offers a densely wooded natural forest as its main feature and attraction. Stanley Park faces onto the city at one structured edge. Its irregular outer edge then forms a continuous circuit around the park onto the water. Georgia Street, Barclay Street and English Bay extend into the park. This transition is done with the aid of the promontory and structured walkways that allow its outer edges to face onto beaches, gardens, and picnic grounds.

Both **Prospect Park** in Brooklyn and **Buttes Chaumont** in Paris are based on the precedent of Birkenhead Park. **Birkenhead Park** in Liverpool is an early design of a park (1814) by Paxton that created an intermediary zone between the city and the park. An undulating park route parallels the city street and forms a transition area where a system of gardens, housing types, entrances and open spaces is composed that enhances the publicness of the park edge and projects a landscape into the realm of the city.

The creation of this zone is in opposition to the very distinct cut made by the Vaux/Olmstead design for **Prospect Park** in Brooklyn. In this park, Olmstead suggests a very strict boundary between the natural and the urban as a way of heightening the effect of each. Unlike Olmstead's earlier design for Central Park in New York City, Prospect Spark is set into an irregular grid system that allows for the creation of entrance spaces varying from the smaller traffic circles to the large Grand Army Plaza. These spaces help to create zones of integration between the city and the park and become organizing poles for the undulating circulation routes.

The main park drive more or less parallels the surrounding city streets and set up potential intermediary zones. Although the edges to the streets are for the most part heavily planted, the Zoological Gardens and other public facilities are located in this zone and suggest an intermediate zone of pavilion structures and public spaces that give way to naturally landscaped areas that cater to the individual user. By concentrating the main routes at the periphery of the park, the huge expanse of the long meadow is made possible.

The paths and circulation routes of Toronto's High Park, while designed in the same undulating manner, do not match the legibility of Prospect Park's routes. Paths do not necessarily lead to public areas, and the roads do not set up a parallel zone that connects to the city within a short distance. This lack of internal structure has repercussions in terms of safety and public comprehension of the interior of the park and where one might logically go to reach the park's many attractions or how to directly find the city street. The paths of Birkenhead and Prospect Parks maximize the interior space of the park by travelling around it. The paths of High Park effectively divide the space.

Buttes Chaumont in Paris, designed by Alphand, takes the legibility of the path system of **Birkenhead Park** and intensifies their occurrence so that their are many paths closely connected to the city streets that lead to central attractions in the interior. The design of Buttes Chaumont also intensifies the idea of Paxton's landscaped park ideal and creates the landscape as a spectacle, a technological wonder that heightened the natural attractions, perhaps establishing a precedent itself as a forerunner to the modern amusement park.

The unbuilt competition entry project by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture for **La Villette** park in Paris intensifies pedestrian systems in a series of overlapping parallel landscapes that are connected by a major transverse route. While this park does not repeat the undulating romantic path, it does extend the technological ideal of Buttes Chaumont by setting up situations of overlapping uses and landscapes, providing sites for attractions that explore human inventions. The serial parallel paths connect repeatedly through the park to the city, and treat the metropolitan park as an intensifier of public space and landscapes rather than a retreat.

Observations and Principles

1. **Place Creation and Modification : Limits to Open Space**

- Metropolitan parks are the largest order of open space in the city. This size is comparable to that of a normal city neighbourhood. This has an impact not only to its immediate context but to that of the entire city structure.

- Metropolitan parks normally are positioned at city peripheries, and may become enveloped by the growth of the city over time. When new metropolitan parks are proposed by city and metropolitan planners, the park's role in directing and influencing future growth of the city should be considered.

- The preservation of environmentally sensitive zones of public value and the preservation of natural waterways and landforms form part of the memory of the city. As such, these elements form the basis and focus for metropolitan parks. The metropolitan park should be enclosed by natural boundaries that distinguish the landforms from urban and inhabited zones.

2. **Place Definition**

- The metropolitan park can contain many smaller types of open space within its vast size. These smaller spaces should have edges of definition within the larger order of the park.

- The edges of the metropolitan park should contain the more public spaces with some built facilities within a peripheral zone that is easily accessible from the public realm of the city street. This zone would include built form aspects of the city and landscape aspects of the natural setting of the park supporting and enhancing the other.

- The metropolitan park should establish visual links that connect it back to more distant areas of the city, that place it into a larger city context.

3. **Place of Possibilities :**
Space in relationship to objects, to each other and to a whole

- Smaller orders of space that are contained within the larger metropolitan park should conform to a legible organization that allows the user to experience the smallest part with some understanding of its place in the larger order.

- These smaller contained spaces should possess their own internal autonomy as spaces that reflect a specific nature, a considered design and an intention.

- The space of the metropolitan park should have the potential both to accommodate very large crowds of people, as well as individual users.

- The entrances to the metropolitan park should be developed as intensely used public spaces that signal the status of the park and are clear points of access.

- The natural setting of the metropolitan park and the more built, hard surfaced structures of urban public space should be permitted to co-exist in an integrated balance that promotes the use of the park for a majority of the citizens in a secure, safe manner.

- The natural setting provides a necessary relief from the congestion of the city, but also can isolate individuals, placing them in vulnerable, unsafe conditions. Clear movement systems that lead quickly and directly to safe areas of more public and collective use should be developed.

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